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I John 3:1-3

# ETERNAL LIFE IN ACTION

## By J. C. MASSEE, D.D.

*Pastor of Tremont Temple, Boston*

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By

J. C. MASSEE, D.D.

*Author of "The Gospel in the Ten Commandments," "Conflict and Conquest in Holiness," Etc.*

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*To My Wife,*
*whose unfailing sympathy and very practical assistance have inspired and greatly lightened my labours in the preparation of this volume.*

# Preface

MORE than twenty years ago in a book the the title of which was "The Heart of the Gospel," by Arthur T. Pierson, the opening sentence of one of its chapters, "When I had read this text over a hundred times this thought came to me," so greatly influenced my method of approach to the Scripture, and my preparation for preaching, as to revolutionise my whole ministry. That summer, when all the churches of the little city of Mansfield, Ohio, with its twenty thousand people, were closing for the summer, I began my first series of illustrated expositions. The results were that my church building was filled to overflowing through the summer Sundays, and my people were greatly edified. The text of those first, and very immaturely illustrated expositions, was the First Epistle of John.

Through the subsequent score of years I have not lost my interest in this last bit of inspiration. Its fascination for me has increased, its message perennially renews its appeal to, and power in, my life. I have been confirmed in the conviction that it is the last Scripture written and that it was given for the express purpose of teaching Christians how to live in the midst of human society.

In these messages I have not referred to any of

the questions involved in critical scholarship in the conviction that those who sit at the table of the Lord are not chiefly concerned with the parings of the kitchen, but that they will relish the prepared food of the table. I have sought herein to present eternal life in action in the daily lives of those who have had the transforming experience of regeneration.

I trust that this illustrative method may serve to stimulate young ministers, that its spiritual truths may quicken many saints, and that some who do not now know the Lord may by the perusal of these pages be led out of darkness into light, so that they too may know that they have passed from death into life.

Whatever of value may be in the messages belongs to Him who loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

J. C. M.

*Tremont Temple,*
*Boston, Mass.*

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# I

## THE TESTIMONY OF EYE-WITNESSES

*"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us; yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."*—I JOHN 1 : 1-3.

THE Gospel is true. It is a trite thing to say. It is a transforming thing to believe. The Gospel is true, yet it is utterly beyond the reach of human reason to grasp it. And it is utterly unbelievable by unspiritual human minds and by the unaided human faculties—yet it is true! But to believe it one must think clearly, setting before himself the historical evidence of its truth, and he must have all his faculties quickened by the Spirit of God, that being spiritual he may discern spiritual things. Now, since the latter is altogether of the Spirit of God, the charge to the Church is to present the truth of the Gospel to the world, and to maintain that

truth in the world upon such evidences as it may have.

### EVIDENTIAL REALITIES

What are the Christian evidences? What are the things that the Church of Christ may present to the world, on which the world may take hold? I answer very simply, THE TESTIMONY OF EYE-WITNESSES. There is nothing else. We are not concerned with the theories of men. We have no concern with the philosophies of men when it comes to the matter of religious faith. For time and eternity we are staking our souls on Jesus Christ. Dare we do it? On what grounds? The testimony of eye-witnesses to the fact that He was and is ETERNAL LIFE. Peter, in his Second Epistle, chapter one, verse sixteen, says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty." And in the first chapter of the Book of the Acts when the disciples came to choose another apostle, to take the place of Judas, the demand was that he who was to be chosen should have accompanied them from the beginning and have been eye-witness to the things which pertain to their Gospel and to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in the earth. I lay that down as a fundamental basic principle on which we are to interpret the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel is the testimony of eye-

witnesses concerning Jesus Christ in this world and their explanations of what His presence in this world meant.

I read the other day that there was in Paris a man, whether a great scientist or a great faker, who had discovered the means by which he could overcome the laws of gravitation. He has been hailed as the greatest discoverer since Newton. He professes to have discovered that by putting two fingers upon another person in a certain way he could exercise enough power to lift such an one from the ground. Leading scientists have been closely investigating this man's strange power carefully, critically, scrutinizing his acts, having him over and over again make his exhibitions. That is ordinary human sense; that is the course of human wisdom. And that was the course that Jesus Christ proposed when He came to this earth. He selected twelve men at the beginning of His earthly career and kept them with Him constantly, bringing every act of His under their immediate scrutiny and supervision, so that when He had finished His career, they could say, "We have seen, we have handled, we have investigated." It will be remembered that some years ago Dr. Cook discovered the North Pole—at least he said he did—and about seven-tenths of the world believed him. But there were certain critical gentlemen who through prejudice or by the aid of entire scientific accuracy brought the claims of Dr. Cook under

investigation and directly his claim was exploded like a punctured balloon and he went down a discredited man.

When the Lord Jesus chose His twelve apostles, He chose men who could weigh evidence. I have no sympathy with those who make them unworthy specimens of the peasantry. They were trained men. Judas was a financier, a man of great ability, of great charm. John was one of the greatest logicians this world has ever seen. No more practical man ever lived than Matthew. Then there were the fishermen who fished, not with line and pole but with nets, and were in partnership in the fish business at the very centre of the world's fish markets. International traffic had its highway at their doors. Thus Jesus selected men who were able to do business and make good at that business in the very centre of the world's activity. One day, in the trustees' room of my church, a drawer in the table about which the trustees sat to count the church money was discovered to be open. In the drawer was a box filled with coins. Immediately it looked as though a charge of carelessness in leaving money thus exposed and unprotected could be levied against the trustees. But when the box was emptied of its contents though the coins were there they were valueless, not one of them bore the "image and superscription" of the American government. They were English, Canadian, French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japan-

ese. From what source had they been collected? You ought to know. The saints who had been unable to work these foreign coins off on the baker, the butcher, the merchant, the tradesman, had passed them on to the treasury of the Lord. It is often done. But those hard-headed practical business men who counted the money were accustomed to trust the evidence of their senses as to money values and instinctively, almost automatically, the foreign coins were rejected as of spurious value to that collection. The good coins went into the treasury, the others were rejected. So that their presence was not an evidence of carelessness, but of carefulness. Each coin was used or rejected according to its value.

One day, on the streets of Gibraltar, I saw a man sitting in the sun with two baskets of eggs before him. One by one he held the eggs up before his eye between himself and the sun, and his trained eye knew immediately by looking through the shell whether the egg was good, bad, or indifferent.

It was this type of men, trained to use their senses, to make discriminating judgments, to pass upon values, whom the Lord Jesus selected to bring His life under inspection.

There was Thomas who said, "You will have to show me. I will not be accepting anything you say about Him till I demonstrate its truth by my five senses." Seeing is believing. Handling is knowing. There were James and John, "Sons of

Thunder," who seriously questioned the Master's whole policy and would have brought down fire from heaven to destroy His enemies. There was His brother Jude who wrote the Epistle bearing his name. He did not believe in the Lord until after He was risen. There was Peter, risking everything upon Him. One after another they were putting Him to the test. Now, five of these men who were with Him, Matthew, James, John, Jude, and Peter, wrote years after He had gone delivering their convictions concerning Him, contending every one of them for "the faith once for all delivered to the saints."

It is then from this angle that John writes, sixty years after the events recorded, "We declare unto you the eternal life manifested in the flesh." There is no more vital word to be spoken in this day than was spoken in John's day—to the metaphysical gnostic in his day and to the materialistic agnostic in this day. John says, "The thing is true for we saw it, we heard it, we handled it." The metaphysical gnosticism of that day said, as Christian Science says today, that matter is inherently evil and God could not come in contact with the flesh. John said, "God was manifested in the flesh, we have seen Him, we have heard Him, we have handled Him, and it is the testimony of our five senses against your gnosticism." "Oh, but it could not have been—it is contrary to all physical science." "But we saw it, we heard it, we handled

it." John says, "We have seen, we have heard, we have handled," therefore, it is all history. That cannot be changed. That word "we beheld" is, literally, "we looked Him through and through." We beheld with constant gaze until we had looked Him through. Thomas handled Him. The Master, with His pierced hand, said, "Thomas, you have not believed. You did not know I was listening when you said, Except you put your finger in the nail-prints you would not believe. Put out your hand now. Here is Mine." We are not told that Thomas *did* put out his finger to that test, but I think the Master saw to it that he did, in order that he might bear witness; and he went down on his knees and said, "My Lord, my God."

Jesus staked everything on the testimony of these witnesses. One grows increasingly indignant at the specious claims of the new scientists and the new theologians. Among these claims none arouses more indignation than the spurious plea that the world does not need an authoritative Bible, that the only need is for an authoritative Christ. Here is a quotation from a recent review of a book written in defense of the historic Christian faith.

"He says, for instance: 'That [Christianity] depends entirely upon Christ. If He is false, it is false. Christianity stands or falls with Him.' Not so. Christianity is life according to an eternal principle bound up in the very being of God. It would be true if Jesus of Nazareth had never lived or if He had

been entirely forgotten. It might not have been discovered so soon, or have become so universally accepted, but, like all truth, it was bound to prevail. As to the Incarnation, it was not simply once but is continuous. Belief in the Virgin Birth or in the Resurrection of Jesus is not absolutely essential to the Christian faith. Christianity does not depend for its credentials on any historic fact."

Here we have a conception of an authoritative Christ, without an authoritative Bible. that is, according to this reviewer, Christ may be even a Person who never lived, one who has not existed.

We do not worship such a Christ. The only source of information we have concerning the Christ of God, or the eternal life revealed in Him, or made available to men through Him, is the Bible, the Word of God. How can we have an authoritative Christ apart from an authoritative Bible? You have no Christ apart from your Bible. Any other conception must be incorrect. Any idea that critical scholarship, or the new sciences settle the question of truth must be discredited and corrected if the Church is to maintain its place, its message, its testimony in the world. Jesus said to His waiting disciples, " Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." Refresh your mind for a moment with the great intercessory prayer of our Lord: " I sanctify myself that the world may know that thou didst send me. Not alone for these do I

pray, but for all those who through their word shall believe on me." "Ye shall receive power," said He, "the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses," eye-witnesses of me unto the uttermost borders of the earth. Go ye into all the world, proclaim the good tidings to all the nations, make disciples of them, baptising them, teaching them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No: the Christian gospel does *not* rest upon reason; it rests upon the evidences supported by testimony, THE EVIDENCES OF THE SENSES SUPPORTED BY THE TESTIMONY OF EYE-WITNESSES.

This testimony of eye-witnesses is supported. The five men who have written the Word, and the great company who believed it for whom they were spokesmen, are supported by all the law and the prophets. On the way to Emmaus, two men walked and they were joined by the crucified but risen Son of God. The scales were upon their eyes. Out of all the law and the prophets Jesus interpreted to them the things concerning Himself, and when under the divine illumination of His exposition they caught the drift and significance of the prophetic utterances of the Old Testament concerning the One who was to come, they realized how perfectly prophecy fitted into history; how fully anticipation had become realization. For these prophecies, uttered centuries before, carefully preserved in the oracles of God and constantly taught as the outstanding hope of Israel, were undeniably

in accordance with the facts to which their five senses gave evidence.

When the Apostle Paul stood before Agrippa to make a defense of himself and plead for his life, he justified himself by preaching the Gospel. His only defense was the Gospel he preached. He proclaimed the heavenly vision which had become at once the inspiration and the compulsion of his whole life. He based his obedience to the compulsion of that vision upon his own testimony as eyewitness and participant. He supported the vision and his subsequent action in relation to it, not on the ground of human reason, nor upon the basis of human wisdom. It is distinctly written that from all the prophets and the law he made appeal to Agrippa. With that argument he drove home the truth to the conscience of the king until he had driven this great Agrippa into a corner. Then he thrust at him with the sword of the Spirit demanding, "Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? You have now two witnesses, my testimony and the testimony of Moses." And Agrippa cried in terror, "Oh, Paul, just a little more, and you would make me a Christian."

There is perhaps nowhere a single soul-winner, turning men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God, from sin to holiness, who does not believe implicitly and explicitly in the testimony which Moses and the prophets bear concerning the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of David,

the Son of God, the Son of man. Nor do the soul-winners of the world have slightest question as to the testimony borne by the authors of the Books of the New Testament. The Old Testament writers saw Him afar off and embraced Him by faith. They bore their prophetic testimony to Him. They identified Him, the Coming One, with prophecies that were remote in time, peculiar in character, and minute in detail. So accurate were their descriptions of Him that when He came any alibi was impossible. But they saw by faith; they declared visions, they uttered mysteries. But in the fulness of time He came, and the real Person fitted the prophetic Person. His disciples demonstrated by their five senses what Moses and the prophets had declared only upon the testimony of heavenly visions. When the disciples had seen and heard and handled Him, unanimously they consented that the message of His life was, and is God. The life, even the eternal life, was manifested in Him. The world demands of the disciples of Jesus, "Who is this Jesus whom you worship—who is He?" The chorus of testimony arising immediately and insistently from the hearts and lips of the believing apostles and disciples is: "In the beginning He was God; from the beginning He is God. Being God, He continues through all eternity God—is now, ever was, and ever shall be." So John, revealing Him in this, which is perhaps the last of all Scriptures, declares, "In the beginning He was God; from the

beginning He is that which He was in the beginning —God." This word of God, like the golden coin of the heavenly realm, rings true. There is no alloy of earthliness in Him. He is pure Divinity, unalloyed Deity. Some one has written this challenging hymn:

"What means this eager, anxious throng,
Which moves with busy haste along;
These wondrous gatherings day by day,
What means this strange commotion, pray?
In accents hushed the throng reply:
'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.'

"Who is this Jesus? Why should He
The city move so mightily?
A passing stranger, has He skill
To move the multitude at will?
Again the stirring notes reply:
'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.'

"Ho! all ye heavy-laden, come!
Here's pardon, comfort, rest, and home.
Ye wanderers from a Father's face,
Return, accept His proffered grace.
Ye tempted ones. there's refuge nigh,
'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.'"

Only this could he have written in truth of God manifest in the flesh. That was the thrill which gladdened the hearts and aroused the startled and amazed interest of the throng in the midst of which He walked while upon the earth. He was Imman-

uel—God with us. Did I say He was? Rather let me insistently declare He *is:* For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. "With whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning."

John has presented to us the evidential realities of the Gospel upon the testimony of the five senses. His witness is corroborated by many others. There is but one issue, his testimony must be accepted or rejected. But it will not matter what the conflict, nor with whom that conflict is waged; here is life, the eternal life manifest in the Son of God. It resides nowhere else in form or person available to man. What think ye of Christ? What will you do with this testimony to His Deity?

### EVIDENTIAL VALUES

So far, I have been speaking of evidential realities. Permit me now to speak of evidential values. What is this thing to which John bears witness as the message of Christ's life and presence in the world? What is it that he and his fellows have seen, and heard, and handled? The answer is simple enough—eternal life. Some one recently said, "I do not go to church any more. I have ceased going because every time I went I was regaled with death-bed scenes and the relation of emotion-stirring incidents until my heart was sick with the froth of emotionalism." Perhaps offense was justified, also, perhaps, the man missed the meaning of such reci-

tations. The thing from which he took offense was not the Gospel. Those things were perhaps nothing more than oratorical addenda designed either to embellish or to make effective the Gospel story. But that is not eternal life; eternal life is not a matter of duration; it is not a matter of heaven; it is not a matter of existence; it is not a matter of reunion with loved ones after death. Everywhere these men present Jesus as eternal life: they present Him as the Divine quality of life—the life of God. They are talking altogether of Him who is the author and source of life. Dr. Findlay declares John's great effort here is to show men that He who is the Author of the eternal universe, that He who began in the beginning His creative work in the realm of nature, continues His creative work in the spiritual experience in the realm of eternal life. In other words, He is showing us that Jesus, Creator of the physical universe, is the Creator and Author of salvation, or men's eternal life, and that they take from Him all that they may take of God. What the temper is to the Damascus blade, what "bottom" is to the Kentucky thoroughbred horses, eternal life is to the Lord Jesus and to those who believe in Him unto salvation. That life is qualitative rather than quantitative. It is the character of God, the nature and the holy being manifest in life as revealed in Jesus, the Son of God. He was of divine quality. He had in Him a divine nature, a divine temper. "No man hath seen the Father

at any time; the only begotten Son He hath declared him." Here is the first and final testimony of John's Epistle: "He was God manifest in the flesh."

Men move through the glorious light of a perfect day unconscious of the light. They live in the light and only become conscious of it when it disappears or is obstructed. But a perfect prism turned toward the sun can be made to refract the light into its seven glorious rainbow-colours so that each one of them can be separately and individually caught, studied, and understood. Then the light, having once been refracted can, by a new prismatic refraction, be so reflected as to be brought back into perfect union, that is, into perfect whiteness. If one may say it reverently, Jesus Christ was the human prism through whom the divine light was brought into perfect perception of the five senses of men. In Him they have seen the Creator at work. He spoke to the water and at the word of its Lord "the conscious water blushed into wine"; He multiplied the loaves and the fishes to feed the five thousand. His eye-witnesses saw the waves in the grip of the storm and Jesus walking calmly upon them, commanding them as God—"Peace, be still." Then the angry waves subsided, and the winds ceased from their fury and there was a great calm. They had seen His blazing wrath in the Temple, as only God can be angry, as He drove at the end of a whip of small cords, out of His Tem-

ple, all who brought commerce therein, saying, "My Father's house shall be a house of prayer." These hucksters had prostituted it to commercial purposes, and His wrath—the wrath of God—flamed upon them for it. They had seen an infinite compassion breathing out of His eyes, making Him touch the leper and forgive the sinner and encourage the hopeless to understand that God would communicate help and cleanness. They had seen Him ruthlessly thrust aside the tradition of the elders and put down the age-long barriers which separated men from God. They had watched Him mark out a new and simpler path of life and teach men how to let their feet take hold upon the way of life eternal. They had seen His forgiving sins resulting in transformation of character.

So vivid is the picture they make of Him that I see Him now walking as God among men. Yonder is a woman taken in adultery and the doctors of the law bring her into His presence with their accusations and He said in effect, "I am going to do exactly what God would do—first of all I shall rid her of her accusers." So when He had suddenly revealed them to themselves they slunk away. Then when He had forgiven her, the woman without a house of refuge and without a home guaranteed for her, or a way by which to make a living, went out to her old environment to live a life as pure and sweet as His own. Somehow, she had caught cleanness from the contagion of His holi-

ness. God had touched her in Christ and made her clean again, and men knew that none but God could do that thing. They had seen God's wisdom flashing out of Him. You remember they came with an order to arrest this troublesome prophet of Nazareth. But the officers, sent to apprehend Him, returned without Him. If one may use a word of the streets concerning that occurrence, the officers were simply bluffed to a standstill. Now when you can bluff a policeman, when you have made him afraid to act, you have discovered certainly some tremendous force of personality. These policemen (for there was not one but a group) who came to lay hands on Jesus, found a personality which somehow inhibited them from the fulfilment of their legal mission. They came back to their superiors without their man. What had happened? Had they returned saying that a mob had resisted them? (It is true the people everywhere were acclaiming Jesus.) Had they rung in a demand for reserves and still been defeated in their purpose to arrest this Galilean prophet? No. There is no intimation that they were interfered with in the discharge of their duties at all. They simply went back and said, "Oh, Sanhedrin, we found ourselves in the presence of God and the hand of our human authority was paralyzed. 'Never man spake as this man spake.'" How was that? He spoke as never man spoke because He lived as never man lived. He lived as no other lived because He was born as

no other man was ever born. God, the Holy Spirit, overshadowed the Virgin, and the Holy Thing which came forth from her was God, so eternal God spoke through His lips.

They had seen Him lay aside the grave clothes of death; they had seen Him come out of the grave which His majesty and power had broken, bearing in His hands the gifts of life and of immortality. And waiting upon His promise in Jerusalem for the gift of the Father to be realized, the Holy Spirit, which Jesus said they should have, came upon them and they were transformed into new men. You cannot take that testimony away from a man. Do you grasp its significance? Do you lay hold upon it? Eternal life, God in man revealed! Manifested then—of equal reality now, with the reality of that day; of equal value with the value of that day. Aye, and of equal potency now with the power of that day in which He walked among men. Ages have waited upon His manifestation of God within the limitations of humanity. He came into the midst of the world's troubled sea of life and immediately the world's courses changed direction. From the day of His earthly advent the world's events have centered at a new centre, the world's vital interests have diverged from a new starting point. The emphasis of His presence in the world has never changed since He came. He divides time in two. He is the fulfilment of prophecy; He is the interpretation of history; He is the end of the law;

He is the incarnation of holiness; He is the Word of God; He is eternal life. Or, beggared of all description, we turn again to Paul's inspired description and joyously hail Him as God manifest in the flesh. In Him the fulness of the Godhead is bodily manifested. All the values of eternal life, its qualities, its glories, its abiding worth, its truth and character are not alone manifested but are made available to men in Him.

There is, down in the State of Florida, a marvelous spring they call the Crystal Spring. It suddenly breaks out of the ground as a river. It started somewhere in the mountains far away, it may have started even in the Rockies three thousand miles away, it percolated the soil, it drove its way under rocks, it broke forth here and there, until it had woven itself into one great moving purpose and gathered its force into a fast flowing river. Then it found a place where, in the providence of God, through yielding soil it burst forth a mighty stream, and from that point down to the gulf and the sea the great stream flows back again to the ocean from which it sprang by way of vapour and cloud and rain and snow to the original source on the far-away mountain tops, from which the streams started and from whose supply their continuous flow is maintained. So God's life, omnipotent, omniscient, all-communicating, all pervasive, reached down out of heaven, the eternal heights, traveled on in subterranean passages of prophecy and cere-

monial until in Christ He broke forth—God eternal, bearing life to the world. Do you see what it means? Can you apprehend it? If that is the Gospel, then, God help you and me to understand that the Gospel calls upon us to make utter renunciation of all creeds that conflict, of all allegiance that hinders our service, of all life that gives Him not the absolute pre-eminence in our hearts, in His Church, in His world, in the universe.

### EVIDENTIAL RELATIONS

Evidential realities emerge into evidential values and result in evidential relations. There is one issue, God and Christ are one—we and God are one; what God communicates to Jesus, Jesus communicates to us—bringing many sons and daughters into life. He Himself became as they were, bearing their flesh, emptying Himself that He might give to them His infinite fulness. You have seen, here and there, a man whose hand was paralyzed because of a cut severing the nerves. It had not been used, the muscles of the hand had atrophied, the hand was paralyzed and had long hung utterly useless. The man could lift his arm some time as far as his elbow, but there was no power in the hand. Some time ago a great physician discovered that by taking the veins of a calf and reducing them to a certain consistency, he might open the muscles of a man's arm and insert this calf's veins, as a protective sheath, take the two ends

of the severed nerves, draw them together within this sheath and they would knit again and the paralyzed hand would be restored. Oh, the wisdom of God, passing all the wisdom of human knowledge! Jesus Christ is the human sheath, inserted into human life so that the divine nerves, severed in man by his sin, may be knitted together again and in Him God and man be made one.

Again, Jesus is the white heat of life welding God and humanity together. As two cold pieces of iron or steel thrust into the flame and held in conjunction until white heat has entered them both would be thus welded together, so, in the white heat of eternal life generated from God in Christ, and the white heat of the life of man in Christ made divine, God and man are welded together in one blessed unity.

In His great intercessory prayer, John 17:22, Jesus proposed nothing short of this very thing, as He prayed, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them: that they may be one even as we are one: I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one."

Again illustrating this same great truth: The nurseryman brings together the bud and the tree in the limb; and the sap, coursing through the tree and through the limb to the bud, unites the two. The sap is the bond of union. The sap is the life without which both the branch and the bud would die. With it coursing freely they live, and live as one.

Did not our Lord Jesus say, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." He is the divine medium conveying the divine nature to man. When that conveyance is made through Him, the life of God is communicated to the life of man and man passes out of death into life. He becomes a partaker of Divine nature, "heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ."

Words fail me to convey to you the full significance of this statement. In Christ you are made one with God. Do you not see that if this miracle happens to you, or has happened to you, you have eternal life? If it happens not you are a lost soul, without God, without Christ, without hope in the world.

Again, if this has happened to you, or if you will permit it to happen to you by the exercise of a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then the life you live, today, will be a reproduction in essential nature of the life Jesus Christ lived in Galilee. As He was God manifest in the flesh, so will you manifest God in the flesh. There is the spiritual necessity, the inevitable logic of life that if you are one with Him in nature, then His nature must triumph in the life you live daily. So the life you live in the flesh you should live by the faith of the Son of God. It will be no longer you that live but Christ who lives in you, the hope of glory. And daily your life will be renewed in Him to manifest anew the glory of God, the holiness, the wisdom, the strength, the purpose, the character of the eternal.

Believe me, if you have this eternal life, the one dominating characteristic of your daily living among your fellows will be love, the bond of peace, and unity. The fruit of the Spirit in you will be love, joy, peace, long-suffering, patience, meekness, gentleness, self-control. Partakers of His nature, there can be in you no manifestation of variance, strife, bitterness, evil thoughts. You cannot yield yourself to indulgence of lustful appetites. These things are impossible to you who by faith in Christ manifest anew the eternal life. Our Lord Jesus came to put away sin in you; He came to destroy the works of the devil in you; and in your world He came not alone to reveal God but to declare God, to manifest God in the flesh—His flesh and yours. You dare not walk with the world. He has given you fellowship with the Father. The supreme, the constant, the all-compelling passion and purpose of your life must be to keep unbroken the fellowship which is with Christ the Lord, and with the Father, and with those who have been quickened into the same precious hope of life and immortality.

## II

# FELLOWSHIP IN LIGHT: THE MESSAGE PRE-EMINENT

*"And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*—I JOHN 1: 5-9.

THE testimony of eye-witnesses concerning the eternal life is that Jesus Christ is God. He is the Life Eternal manifested in the flesh. Eye-witnesses bear testimony to the fact that He is God manifest in the flesh. But their testimony goes further; not alone is He Life Eternal but in Him Life Eternal is made available for men. According to John the purpose of the Gospel announcement is to bring others into fellowship with those who have been eye-witnesses of the majesty of the Son of God. They have seen and heard and handled the Word of Life and they announce the

results of their investigation and present them as evidence of the great spiritual realities, upon which they invite others to come into a three-fold and blessed fellowship with the Father, with the Son and with the saints. Herein is the fulness of joy! Christ was and is God; the fulness of the Godhead bodily manifest, the effulgence of His glory, the pressed-forth image of the eternal life. It is of His fulness that we receive. Grace for grace, strength for strength and glory for glory, are given to those who believe in Him. Such communication could not but produce the fulness of joy in the Lord. But this joy is that which being analyzed means love, peace, unity, poise, power, communion and realization. Summing it all up, John declares that this is the message by way of pre-eminence. Here is the content of the whole Gospel message. Here is the summing up of the testimony. Here is the result of the weighing of the evidence. Here is the announcement pre-eminent in its finality, and authority, and all-embracing comprehensiveness—GOD IS LIGHT. Here is the pressed-out essence of Life Eternal.

I have in my possession a bottle of rare perfume —Houbigant's. It is the attar of roses, so mightily concentrated in the little bottle which has never been opened since it left the factory, that the rich and fragrant odour distils even through the glass, or escapes in spite of the stopper which fits as a part of the glass itself. It is as if, holding it in my hand,

I have the heart of the roses as they reveal themselves when the last restraining calyx had loosed its hold, the last reluctant petal had been unfolded to the sweetness of the sunshine, so that the freshness of the air, and the gentle purity of the dew had all been caught and pressed into this one bottle and now given to me. So the message of Christ's Person, the evidence that the five senses of the eye-witnesses had taken concerning Him, is concentrated into this one word—LIGHT. Christ is God, God is Light.

John says that "this is the message we heard from Him" and this is therefore the message we announce unto you, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." It is not recorded that Jesus ever said these words with His lips, but all that He was and all that He did, and every word that He spoke said it. "God is light" is presented to the world in every phase and attitude of the life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. That marvelous revelation is made in His gentleness and His sternness, in His patience and His power, in His poise and His passion, in His purity and His purpose. Alike in His speech and in His silence, in His holiness and His humanness, in His life and in His death. All cry aloud wherever life touches Christ, wherever men hear His voice or sense His presence, or see His activities, this message—"This is God, and God is light." George Adam Smith, in his commentary on Isaiah, says that the world's constantly

reiterated question is, "If God should dwell among men what kind of man would He be?" Here is the answer, "Jesus." The whiteness of His life, the radiance of His transfigured body, the unsurpassed wisdom of His speech, the flaming wrath of His righteous indignation, blend together to produce the white light of God.

Dr. Findlay says that the day cries its light at the windows. It has no voice, it utters no speech. But when it comes, sleepers stir and rise and go forth to work; in the forests the birds carol their songs, the beasts come forth from their lairs, creeping things of the night crawl away to hide. The whole world awakens and goes forth to its appointed tasks. Summoned by the light! I have seen the light break upon the sea with every wave a scintillating peak of glory. I have observed the light coming upon the tops of the mountains, every peak a sentinel of joy. I have seen it break in field and forest, verdant with the green glow of spring, or golden with the first touch of autumn. I have seen the light come in the heart of a great city, and everywhere the effect of its coming has been the same—to make the world a new world and man a new creature. So God in Christ is light, and His coming has the same effect—it awakens the world, it transforms the world, it startles and challenges, it arouses and calls forth men and transforms them into children of light. It arouses the sleeping soul of the world and calls men forth to their appointed

tasks, renews their courage, and provides their comfort. The mere fact of the light of His presence sends them forth again with song and cheer on their way toward a goal and a reward, and hence with an ever-living inspiration before their eyes. All that physical light is to the physical universe, the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is to the moral, the intellectual, the spiritual world. He is in deed and in truth the Light of the world. The Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings.

### GOD IS LIGHT

What a conception of God! It broke upon the world first in Jesus Christ. It was a conception the world had never known before, not even in its highest and best religious forms and thought. It was not known among the Jews with the significance Jesus attaches to it. "God is light" is utterly beyond the thought of paganism and of heathenism. To them the message of their gods was lust. Read the great stories of mythology. The gods of the Greeks and Romans were half-human, frequently half-bestial, devoted to lust and lying and deception and cruelty; revered, if at all, only because they were still clothed in superstitious fear, awful rather than inviting. Ancient paganism, Greece and Rome in their highest culture, knew no higher gods than Jupiter and Diana of the Ephesians, Daphne of the Corinthian groves and Minerva, Mars, Mercury

and Cupid. No wonder that their civilisation was utterly corrupt when the highest religious thought was in itself reduced to the lowest moral factor. The nature of the people partook of the nature of their gods.

Take the terrible descriptions of *Quo Vadis,* or any other book setting forth the bestial sensuality of the Golden Age of Rome, when the great Cæsars were upon the throne and the world trembled at the tread of the empire's military feet. Their gods were monsters and the result of this worship of monsters was a monstrous reality. Look into modern heathenism—India with its temple girls, its deification and worship of lust, its unthinkable degradation of women, its unspeakable systems of caste. Behold the paganism, materialism and sensuality of the Christless portions of the population of any of our great cities of the so-called Christian nations. To speak of these things is to put them in utter contrast to the Gospel conception of God as light illuminating the mind, quickening the soul, stimulating every moral faculty, making sin odious and immorality hideous and vileness impossible to those who have come into the light and have apprehended Him who is the one divine medium of translation of the light of God into the lives of men. His life was the one perfect human refraction and reflection of the divine light and life.

Take Mohammedanism. It spells license, not light. The creed of Mohammedanism, " There is

one God and Mohammed is His prophet," is supported upon the crest of a tidal wave of cruelty which, again and again, has swept over all bounds, deluged many lands and destroyed more than one civilization. The crescent and the sword are joined in unholy wedlock. Out of the religion of Mohammedanism the Armenian massacres proceed through recurring centuries together with the unspeakable confusions of polygamy. The corruptions and degeneracy of the harems are a part and parcel of the religion whose background is moral darkness and despair—never light. That God is light breaks upon the souls of the heathen and of the pagan world as it broke upon the souls of that world into which Christ made His first advent. To those who apprehend Him He is light shining in the darkness. It is only to those whose souls are blinded with the darkness of sin or of superstition, or who stubbornly shut their eyes to the revelation of God, that He remains aught else. Our God in Christ Jesus is light which is interpreted in terms of truth, purity, holiness of character, chastity of speech, righteousness of conduct, tender compassion of feeling toward the needy, of steadfast firmness in adherence to the truth and of loyalty and devotion to duty. He brings light upon all life's problems. He illuminates the path in which human feet must walk and "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He sets men in the light. He exposes men to the light. He gives to the world its moral stand-

ards, ideals, customs. His presence and His projections alike are light.

### LIGHT COMMUNICABLE

It should be observed also that His revelation of God as light is a different thing from even the highest revelation of the monotheism of the past. Moses had seen God as light unapproachable. Jesus reveals God as light communicable. Moses—"No man can see God and live." Jesus—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Jesus was the true light that lighteth every man coming into the world. It is fitting and natural, therefore needful, indeed, it is imperative that the Gospel invitation should be:

"Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee;
Sweetly the Light has dawn'd upon me.
Once I was blind, but now I can see,
The Light of the world is Jesus.

"The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,
Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in.

"No darkness have we who in Jesus abide,
We walk in the Light when we follow our Guide.

"Ye dwellers in darkness with sin-blinded eyes,
Go wash at His bidding, the light will arise.
THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS."

It is inevitable that the Gospel result should be "The blind receive their sight." Seeing it is God

who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness" it was He who "hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

### FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LIGHT

The Light is the basis of our fellowship. We are all children of light. How startlingly John thrusts upon us the fact that "If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. . . . And our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." And our fellowship is maintained in unbroken perfection by the blessed fact that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Stand some morning upon the corner of any downtown street and see the multitudes pour forth to join their lives in one constant flowing stream of humanity. The light has called them forth and called them together into the fellowship of the day's labours, even as the night had separated them and sent them each to his own secluded cover. So do men come to the light in Christ Jesus the Lord out of every dark haunt of sin; from all the darkness of superstition; from dens of vice and iniquity; out of the moral shadows of ignorance and superstition; up from the deeper darkness of spiritual blindness; from their hiding, fearing, groping in the night of their souls' separa-

tion from God, they come forth at the bidding of the presence of One who is light, and go with the glad light of a new day upon and within them, to their God-appointed tasks, brought into an abiding fellowship of life by their response to the light which is in Him. I have seen the shining sheen of the sun reflecting its glory in a dewdrop. I have seen its light on the ocean, caught and reflected gloriously. But they are one in essence, the ocean and the dewdrop, by their response to the light of the sun. I have seen Christ transforming the life of the individual and I have seen His glory shining forth in a body of believers. But the fellowship of each with the other is the fellowship of that light of God manifest in Christ.

But here is an even more startling consideration: The Light is the basis of all our Gospel evangel. The conflict of Christianity with heathenism, paganism, materialism, rationalism, occultism, is the conflict of light with darkness. Later in his epistle, pursuing this same theme, John tells us, " We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself and the evil one toucheth him not. And we know that we are begotten of God and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. My little children, guard

yourselves from idols." He had already written, "A new commandment write I unto you which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away and the true light already shineth. He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes."

The conflict is a vital one. The darkness must disappear before the light, or the light be swallowed up by the darkness; therefore, the evangel must be proclaimed. The whole Church, the whole Christian community, every individual Christian must do as John and the early apostolic group did—declare constantly, continuously, our experience of the light. We must bear our personal witness to the fact that Christ is Life Eternal and that without Him the whole world lies in darkness. We must realise also that wherever we go and whenever we go, the waiting world will prick up its ears to hear the old, old story, so simple in its telling, so efficacious in its working. Of every land where Christ is proclaimed it may be truly sung:

"See heathen nations bending
Before the God we love,
And thousand hearts ascending
In gratitude above;

While sinners, now confessing,
The Gospel's call obey,
And seek a Saviour's blessing,
A nation in a day."

It is with this word, the evangel of light alone, that we can answer the challenge of the nations, the Macedonian cry of the lost, of a benighted world. Hear them singing:

"From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand;
Where Africa's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand:
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
Their land from error's chain.

"Shall we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Shall we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation! O salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till earth's remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name."

### THE LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS

The world has never apprehended this most stupendous truth. Millions miss it this very hour. John wrote of Him in his Gospel, "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness apprehended

it not. . . . He was in the world . . . and the world knew him not." But let us thank God He did not cease shining because the darkness did not apprehend. Brighter shines His glory, whiter the light of His revelation, more glorious the effulgence with which He proclaimed to men that: "GOD IS LIGHT."

A little while ago, in a public park one evening, when the shadows lay like a mantle over the earth, I came suddenly upon a great trellis piled with the branching prongs of a cactus—a night-blooming cereus. And in the midst of the vine hung one great, splendid, perfectly white blossom—child of the light, born in the night. It was overwhelmed by the darkness, surrounded, submerged by it, but every petal was pure light, not a fleck of colour, all the colours of the rainbow blended together in perfect whiteness—the darkness could not destroy it. That darkness had no effect upon the flower save to make it shine the more and give off the heavy but delicious fragrance which came out of its own open heart. As I looked upon it, I said in my soul, "Oh, perfect flower, without speech or language, how you rebuke the night. While the sun was yet shining and you grew in its presence, you absorbed into your heart so much of the light of day that the joy of that light within has compelled the breaking of your heart to give its white and fragrant beauty to the night." But even as it rebuked the night, it attracted the crowds and soon there was gathered

about it a company of people who admired and wondered and rejoiced. So all children of the light! Having believed in Christ, and of His fulness received, each believer becomes a radiating centre of light shining in the darkness, with a beauty and spiritual fragrance as irresistibly attractive as is He, who, when lifted up, draws all men unto Himself. Ah, the winsomeness of a life hid with Christ in God!

We cannot walk in the darkness and have fellowship with the light. Nor can we walk in the light and give place to the darkness, so if the darkness lay its mantle upon us, if sin overtake us, miracle of mercy—behold God provides the remedy! There is cleansing in the blood for every child of the light. Others may miss it and bear the soil of sin upon their souls out into the night of eternal darkness and separation from the Father. But the children of the light may have the continuous process of cleansing in their experience, even as God has made the eternal provision for cleansing in the blood of His Son. There is no stain too black for that Fuller to whiten; there is no spot too foul for that cleansing to purify. Wherefore there goes forth from the Father, by the lips and life of His Son, the exhortation given long ago to those who had wandered into the night and lost themselves in the darkness, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man

his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God for he will abundantly pardon." "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." God's provision is for cleansing; our own course is confession. We must expose ourselves and our sin to the light; then shall we find that sin will die out in us. Just as miasma, sickness, evil odours, decay, all cease when exposed to the light, so sin within, so the taint of darkness upon us cease when we set ourselves in the light. Oh, let us learn to set our sins in the light. Here is the cure. Here is the remedy for sin. Here is the guarantee of fellowship,—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I had a friend given to a censorious spirit and a fault-finding tongue. She long justified herself on the excuse of provocation by others. There came a day when she openly and humbly confessed her sin, and set it forth in the light of Christ and publicly claimed deliverance from it. I saw her life transformed. I saw it catching the light, responding to the light, being filled with the light, and finally she became a light, lighting many souls out of the darkness of sin into the light that shines in

the face of Jesus Christ to the saving of souls. So it will ever be for all sins and for all who are His—children of light. Oh, that we might live in the light and walk in the light until sin dies out in us, until there be no darkness within or without for us who are His. "If we walk in the light as he is light"—What an ambition! But it may be attained. What a goal! But it is our goal if we are to have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and with the saints.

## III

## THE ONE MEDIATOR

*" My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandment, is a liar and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him: he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked."*—I JOHN 2: 1-6.

THERE is only one divine standard, only one divine conception of human life in Christ Jesus, and that is the one with which we are constantly faced throughout this Epistle of John, as indeed throughout all the Scriptures, " My little children, these things write I unto you that you may not sin." Note the intense tenderness of the Apostle John toward those to whom he writes, " My little children." One of the great Greek commentators says that the significance of this is " dear children." It is the first time this word is employed, " My little children." You can almost

sense the apostle as a father taking them into his arms, gathering them about his knees, putting caressing touches on their heads and enveloping them in the great overflowing love of his life.

When John wrote these words, he was perhaps more than ninety years of age, and this fact accentuates the marvelous attitude of beneficence, thoughtfulness, and tenderness he showed toward his flock. There were those who were as dear to him as life itself. They were the last remaining ties of earth, more potent than those who were bound to him by fleshly ties, or earthly love. He has laid down great eternal truths for them, revealed on the testimony of eye-witnesses, that Jesus is God, the Eternal Life. He has declared that the great fundamental revelation of Christ is that GOD IS LIGHT. Men who have fellowship with the Father must have fellowship with one another and remove sinful situations so that the children of God may dwell in light. And so he yearns over them, these little children of his ministry—"that ye may not sin."

Notice, first of all, the pastoral attitude of John toward his people. It is a parental one. It is exactly similar to the one Paul had toward those whom he led to Christ. You will find many evidences of it in Paul's writings. In I Cor. 4: 14 we read, "I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet

have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the Gospel."

And then it is a pedagogical one. Every father is also a disciplinarian. No man can be a true father and not be a teacher. The child must be taught to walk, and taught to talk. He must be taught to make spiritual discrimination. And so John's attitude is parental, pastoral and pedagogical. One of the most remarkable passages in the Bible is I Cor. 3: 10. Indeed, Paul here says the pastor must be apt to teach. "According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon." Paul is talking there of the relation of the pastor to his people, the relation of a teacher to those who are to be taught in Christ. And it should be borne in mind that all that is said after this is said to the teachers of the Christian community. If a minister leads any person to Christ, he must baptise that one, and teach him. That is the pastoral evangelistic relation, or the evangelistic pastoral relation enjoined in the Great Commission of Matt. 28: 18 ff. But whether he has led the soul to Christ, or whether the souls are committed to him, the foundation is laid in their mutual relation to Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it

is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is." That has not anything to do with the way the individual lives each day. But God is here talking through the Holy Spirit to the teacher. "If any man's work shall abide, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire."

There comes to my mind an event of my youth in which I saw this quality of spiritual discrimination operating in the mind of my old father, a man marvelously taught in the Word of God, and wondrously discerning the truth. He had read a sermon of one of the most celebrated preachers of thirty years ago, and as he finished he said, "It is an extremely interesting dissertation, but he neither knows nor preaches the Gospel at all." And I thought he set himself up as judge with considerable conceit. But where is that preacher's work today? Gone—and there is hardly a vestige of it left! Only a group of about one hundred and fifty people who meet once a year. "Tested by fire." Not a teacher, a pulpit orator. I lay no accusation against him, but I use that famous man in order to drive home to your hearts the fact that no ministry can last without the teaching priest. "Build on it." The man himself is saved; the preacher is not cast off as spurious coin; his work is burned up, but he himself is saved as by fire. Here is a pastoral rela-

tion; it is a relation which binds him to Christ and binds him to his people in Christ. God commands men to communicate with those who teach because they are to watch as one who watches for their souls. He declares it is the task of the teacher to build on the foundation of Christ and to build that foundation into the very life and character of his people. In this Paul's teaching closely parallels John's conception of the pastoral office.

### A FAMILY LETTER

This first Epistle of John is a family letter; it is a letter of a father to his children. His purpose is to set before them the divine standards and ideals for their life in the world. My impression is that this is the last bit of Scripture written. There are certain passages in Scripture that lead you at once to think of certain things. The judgment passage of Matthew 24 and 25; the great love passage of I Cor. 13, coming as it does between I Cor. 12 and 14, the climax production of the fruitage of the Holy Spirit. Thus is the Epistle of James the Holy Spirit's instruction to the Christian concerning the Christian method of conduct in business. It is the business epistle. You come to consider the principles of citizenship in the light of Scripture, and directly you realise that the Spirit has given an express revelation concerning citizenship in the kingdom of heaven in the Epistle to the Philippians. The Christian's seat of government is in heaven.

Here in John's epistle the Holy Spirit indites a message setting forth the Christian's relation to human society in the midst of men as he lives his daily life in the world. The Christian's attitude to the world is that which John sets forth here and he does it with marvelous faithfulness to character and wondrous clearness of spiritual insight, and discerning judgment of issues and values. In his vision on Patmos, recorded in the Book of The Revelation, John by the Spirit has permitted us to glimpse the things that were to come to pass. That Book is properly divided into five sections:

Chapter 1—The Manifestations of the Master.
Chapters 2-3—The Master's Messages to the Churches.
Chapters 4-18—Manifestations of Judgments.
Chapters 19-20—The Millennial Kingdom in Operation.
Chapters 21-22—The Manifestations of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In this Revelation the Christian disciples of the first century were permitted a glimpse into heaven. They saw the glory of its Central Figure; they saw the rewards of the saints at the judgment of the nations. They were permitted from the midst of the events to interpret world-history in the light of the world's relation to the Son of God. They were permitted to measure eternity with the yardstick of time as revealed in the self-emptied and self-limited Person of Christ. There was held before them the

promise of the glory that was to be. It can be easily imagined, however, that there arose at once in their minds anxious questioning. They could recognise the glory of the future, but what of the difficulties, the trials, the responsibilities and the temptations of the present? The Master is to come again and His reward will be with Him, but what of the Christian in the meantime? How is he to carry on? What are to be the governing principles of his life? What of his relation to human society and human institutions in this world age? Then once again, the Holy Spirit put the pen of inspiration into John's hand and he wrote his First Epistle to give to the Christian Church instructions as to how a Christian should behave in human society *ad interim.*

### THE CHRISTIAN'S STANDING

What is meant by "standing"? It is not difficult to define. Every man has a certain standing in his profession. In the Southland the coloured population has a standing as servants; they are the servant class. There are those who have made something else of themselves, but they are the exceptions. They are honoured because they are able to overcome their environment. But the standing of the race is the standing of servants. During the great world war certain men were deported from our shores because in regard to our government their standing was that of aliens and enemies. We

have certain social standings. I have no standing at all in certain fraternal circles, nor do I desire any. There are certain standings that men seek but never attain. Here in this Book our standing in this world is the standing of God's children, sojourners, pilgrims. The child of God has found no permanent and certain abiding place in the world. The standing of Christians in the world, if they have any standing, is that of men who are separated from this world by the Gospel call, by the Gospel commands, by the Gospel commission and by everything that relates them to God. We are heavenly citizens in an earthly environment. Our seat of government is in heaven. Our first allegiance is to the Lord in glory.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S STANDARDS

Our standards are not of this world. Over and over again our standards require us to make an absolute separation from the world, and from the spirit of this age. Through Paul the Holy Spirit commands the Christian: "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And by John, "If we say we have fellowship with the Father and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." We are therein false even in our conception of truth. If we have fellowship with Him, we

have fellowship one with another. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the vain glory of life." These things are utterly inconsistent. The Christian's standards in this world are the standard measurements of heaven. He can have only one yardstick. He can weigh life in only one balance. So all his speech must be chaste and his thinking true and his life pure. "Holiness unto the Lord" is the imperative of his life's standards.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S STAND

For these standards he must stand. John earnestly insists that every child of God should settle for himself where he is to stand on certain Christian principles. The other day I met a gentleman, the secretary of one of the greatest corporations in America. To my intense delight I found that he had an ardent love for my Lord. In the course of our conversation he turned suddenly to me and smiling said, "You know I have only had this thing nine months and I have just got to talk about it all the time." I said, "Tell me about it." He said, "You know I was in my office and a preacher came down and asked me for the privilege of preaching to the factory hands. I indignantly refused his request. I told him, 'All my family have their stated places of worship. I am an Episcopalian. When

I wish to attend church or hear preaching I go where I think the gospel is preached according to my liking. What is the use of this shop preaching anyway?' The preacher looked at me and said, 'You go to church, and they go to church, but do you know the Lord?' He said, 'I know I am saved.' I looked at him and said, 'The nerve of you to sit here in my office and tell me you know you are saved.' But: before he left I knew I was saved too. He led me through to Christ. If that preacher had begun to hem and haw and tell me there were explanations, there were other understanding, and other interpretations, I would have been a lost soul this hour. He took his stand and he stood on the thing God revealed to Him, that was his salvation—and it was my salvation also."

Have you any definite stand on the questions of moral debate? Have you settled certain questions? Out in an Ohio University a senior young fellow asked a sophomore girl one evening if he might kiss her? She said, "I would not mind your kissing me at all. I would rather like to have you do it, but if I should let you kiss me tonight you would not be satisfied. When you came again you would want to kiss me again. There would be no end to it. For myself, I have settled the stand I am to take, no man can kiss me until I am his betrothed wife." Have you any stand about the business of this world? I know men who never smoke, except when they are in certain circles. I am not here discussing

smoking, but the spineless attitude of the man who smokes behind closed doors, the man who lowers his standards when he is surrounded by certain circumstances and companions. A Christian man must have standards and stand panoplied with the whole armour of God and armed with a sword of truth in his hand, so that having done all, he may stand. Who has authority to make the Christian standards? Who has responsibility in these matters save himself? That responsibility must be recognised and obeyed by each disciple for himself. Having standing with God he must maintain the divine standards, he must take a stand in standing for the standards which are set up by the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian man must have certain standards of living born out of his divine relationship and he must stand by those standards at all costs.

Consider briefly two facts presented by this Scripture. First, The Divine Imperative. Second, The Divine Empowering.

### A DIVINE IMPERATIVE

There is a divine imperative, "I write unto you that you may not sin," has as its equivalent, you MUST not sin. The Gospel proposes a sinless humanity. The solemn truth of God is that He has but one law for men who claim a right relation with Him; and that law is "I am holy, be ye holy." "I am El Shaddai, God Almighty; Walk thou before

me and be thou perfect." The almightiness of God brought Abraham face to face with God's command: Be in this world as God is in His heaven. And that same almightiness of holiness brings us today face to face with the very same demand that we live in consonance with the character of the holy God if we claim fellowship with Him. That as Christ is in the world, so are we in the world. There is never the slightest reasonable excuse for a child of God sinning. Paul said, "How can we continue in the things which once characterised our conduct since we have been born into God's kingdom." That is, the sin is in itself wrong, sinful, and there is the added sin of yielding to sin. So that every sin of the Christian is in essence two sins. It is a sin for a Christian to sin! There is a new individualism, a new preachment today that if a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ this is all that is required of him. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ requires the evidence of the faith that has brought him out from under the domination, or dominion of sin—*you must not sin.* For this reason I write unto you, my little children.

The Holy Spirit is here giving direction and inspiration that you must not sin, because it is contrary to the eternal nature, the eternal life you have received in Christ Jesus. It is in Christ Jesus not to sin. It is not Christ's character to sin and you have received Him. It is not a question of environment; not a question of social order. It is a ques-

tion of divine imperative, for having the nature of God in you, you must not sin. He that hath the seed of God in him sinneth not. It is not my business to explain or modify this statement. I proclaim the Word of God to you. He regenerates. He re-begets. There is implanted in this soul of mine, or in that soul of yours, the divine nature, and now through the blood of Christ sin is taken out of the way, and by the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit is made available and you are changed into a new creature and all of the spiritual essence of God's nature in you cries out against the possibility of your sinning any more. If you have in you Christ the hope of glory, if you be wholly yielded to the Spirit of God, you could live in hell and live a holy life. God within, living out His nature! This is the explanation of the Christian life. You must not sin because it violates the light in which you walk. "If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth."

I have been having trouble in my apartment with the electric light fuse. I blamed everybody in sight but myself. It is perfectly natural, thoroughly in keeping with nature, to find a scapegoat. I blamed the house: I blamed the landlord: I blamed the janitor: I blamed the children. Then I sent for an electrician. He came once; he came twice; he came three times. After a while between us we discovered that the lights never went out, and the fuse

never blew out, with any ordinary use. But I have an electric stove for heating. Frequently in putting in the socket connecting with the stove the fuse blew out. We discovered that when the fuse blew out, though the whole house was still lighted, there was no light in my apartment. And the reason for the whole trouble lay in the connection of the stove with the socket. There was a loose connection. That was all. Now I have made the same discovery about my spiritual life. When I am in spiritual darkness, there is always a loose connection between God and me somewhere. As long as there is close connection with Him my life blazes with light because it is flaming with His personality. There was no trouble with the incandescent bulb, but it requires fifty times as much electricity to run the stove as it does to run the lights and the fuse simply burns out with the requirements put upon it by the stove.

Thousands of God's children in the world go on in all the ordinary vocations of life very righteously, their conduct is reasonably correct, but there comes some time of stress, temptations come upon them and they blow out a spiritual fuse, and are in the dark. They fail in that situation simply because the loose connection with God becomes evident in the greater strain. May the eternal God help us to see His demand that we should be so vitally connected to God that there will be light and power flooding our lives in all moments of great testing.

There is power enough if your connections are vital. If your life is weak, if your testimony is failing, if you are going down in defeat, if you are not realising in yourself the power of the testimony of Jesus Christ, in God's name, repair the connections that are broken, or that are loose or incomplete.

Also John says, "You must not sin because your sinning ignores your fellowship with God's saints." The sin of every believer is the sin of all believers. I saw a charming young girl at home and said to her, "Daughter, why aren't you at school?" She was having trouble with her eye. There was not a thing the matter with her brain. I saw the evidence of its perfect co-ordination. There was nothing directly the matter with her beautiful face. Her eye was sick, and therefore her whole body was sick. One tonsil may poison the whole body and one tubercule in your lung may kill the body, AND one sin in the life of one believer diseases the whole body of Christ. On my account you have no right to sin. *You have no right to sin.* The whole spiritual body is diseased if one soul sins. We dare not do the thing out of consonance with Christ's character for the sake of fellowship. Oh, what a fearful thing sin is! "Abhor that which is evil." Sin is a horrible thing! You do not like me to talk about sin. It is an ugly word. Dr. Howard, of Australia, tells how one of his friends said to him, "There is just one thing you are everlastingly

harping on—sin. It is not a pretty subject and it is not a pretty word. If you did not talk so much about sin you would have more people to listen to you." But Dr. Howard replied, "Look at these bottles. This bottle has on it 'arsenic.' This is the pure essence of arsenic, a deadly poison. I understand that what you want me to do is to take off the label and put on another label. Let us say 'essence of peppermint.'" And he said, "Yes, that is it." And Howard turned on him with his face blazing with wrath and said, "Man, in God's name, don't you see that the milder the label, the deadlier the sin? Call it a mistake, it is sin. Call it stumbling, it is sin—horrible, deadly, poisonous, damnable, death-entailing sin." You must not sin. No man without holiness can see the Lord.

In Dayton we heated our houses with natural gas. We noticed that every winter when it got cold, the gas gave out. In discussing that situation with some people, they said to me, "We have no trouble about gas. Cold as it is, we people on the hill have gas enough." Which revealed the fact that the higher the situation of the house the stronger the pressure of gas in that house, the more certain was both light and heat there. The higher the life, the more certain the power that lifts life above the lowlands. Do not be afraid to live upon the hills whence comes your help and from whence the vision of God is brought near. The resources of God are nearest to the man who lives in the high-

est spiritual altitudes. Heavenly visions have a further stretch of horizon and a clearer view from the mountain peak. The Master ever sought the mountain tops before descending to the duties and dangers of the plains. It was from a mountain He came down to touch the leper, to heal the epileptic, to give the Great Commission. So men who dare the heights will always realise the presence and the power of God.

### THE DIVINE EMPOWERING

But once again briefly, "I write unto you that ye may not sin." Here is the divine empowering. Jesus Christ has made propitiation for your sins. He has paid the debt. He has wiped out the obligation. He has borne the penalty. Christ is Himself the healer, the cleanser, the sanctifier. He is the life! His death removes the barrier of sin and His life provides for the believer's holiness. I stumbled over this verse for twenty-five years and would not quote it. I have been afraid men would misunderstand it. For days I have been before God and He has given me the meaning of it. Here it is, "He is the propitiation for our sins; not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world." The difference is that He has made propitiation for all men. Cleansing, covering, is available to all men, but it is efficacious only to those who have received it. In your house the wires go from room to room and every wire is connected with the main cable which

joins it to the power house—the source of light. But only those rooms in your house are lighted where the light is turned on. The darkness is upon the others. I live in a cold, dark house. My neighbour's house is warm and ablaze with light. I make complaint about the coldness and the darkness and he asks me if I have turned on the light. Touching a button the room is flooded with light; power comes and heat is provided. Oh, lives that are dark! Oh, souls that are chilled with this world! Out of the central power house of His own life throughout the whole wide world, power comes and if you will turn on by faith that power into your own life, you will understand how Christ my Lord can redeem, save and empower a soul. No situation can arise for the Christian in which Christ is not both ready and able to supply spiritual power by the Holy Spirit unto all enabling.

### CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE

But He does more than that. He is our Advocate. He is more than a propitiation for my sins. He is my covering. He has put His body over my body. He has put His mind over my mind, His soul over my soul, until now in my life God sees naught save His righteousness as my righteousness, and my sin has become His sin and it is as if we have changed places. I refer all things to Him in my relation to God. If we have sinned—if the accident has happened,—if the law of holiness has

been violated, if Satan has set a snare, if the pit has opened before our feet and we have stumbled or fallen we have an Advocate with the Father. As cleanser, as salvation, as provider, He sits down at the right hand of the majesty on high. But as Advocate He stands at the right hand of the majesty to plead my cause. If I had a case in court, the first thing I should do would be to call for my lawyer. Then I would leave the matter in his hands. I would let him prepare my brief and plead my case. Paul writes to Philemon about Onesimus, "If he owes anything, charge that to my account. I will pay it." And the great word of Christ concerning my own sin is, "Charge it to me. I plead for that on the basis of the death I have wrought." He thus makes himself my responsible Advocate guaranteeing redemption.

One day, in Philadelphia, a gentleman said to me as we rode down the street in his automobile, "I want you to go with me to the Civic Club to dinner. Every outstanding preacher is a member of the Club, the service is quick and you will have an altogether delightful meal." Now, I had no standing in that Club. I could not have been admitted. But I went in, my coat and hat were taken; I was served, a perfectly delicious dinner. I ate it. I came away without so much as the charge of a tip, BECAUSE MY ADVOCATE WAS ALONG. He had the price to pay and was willing to do it. It was his task to bring me in and I went in on him.

Bless your heart! One of these days I am going to God's court above and I am going to walk in and sit down at God's table and feast and enjoy the music and I am going in never to come out, on my Advocate's admission. He has provided that for every disciple. In the meantime, I live here as if I belonged to the Kingdom of Heaven.

# IV

## THE NEW COMMANDMENT

*"Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth. He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes."*—I JOHN 2:7-11.

HERE are two vital contrasts, the child of God set in the light and, walking in the light, is distinct and different from all others who walk with him the way of the world. His source of life is different, his realm of living is different, his fellowship in life, his standards, conduct and relations are all different, owing to his separation from the world and the things of the world by virtue of his relationship to God in Christ. In the life of this Christian individual, these contrasts appear; the old commandment and the new commandment: the old realm of darkness

and the new realm of light: the old governing principle of hate and the new governing principle of love.

### THE OLD COMMANDMENT IN CONTRAST TO THE NEW

The old commandment was that which they had from the beginning. It was that which, if we may anticipate, finds its fulfilment in the new. It is to the new commandment what law is to grace, the schoolmaster leading to Christ. Love not only is the fulfilment of the law, *it always has been the fulfilment of the law.* The essential nature of God does not change, therefore the essential outgoings of God never vary. If "God is love" under the Christian dispensation, no less was it true that "God is love" under the Mosaic dispensation. The Master taught this when He declared that all the law hangs on two commandments, namely; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength: And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Though not always so understood, love, not law, is fundamental in the kingdom of heaven. "God is love," and every expression of His Person and of His energy is the expression of love. In nature—light; in expression —love. He manifests Himself in gracious outgoings toward His people. But it is essentially and inescapably true that when God communicates of

His nature to a man, He creates His nature within the man.

The Old Testament is full of tenderness. Wherever sternness appears, it is rightly interpreted as an aspect of government. God is the pitying Father, the yearning lover, the tender nursing mother, the shepherd, the friend, the husband, the keeper of the vineyard, the comforter of His people. It was fundamentally true then also that what He was to His people, He expected them to be toward Him and toward each other. The old commandment of love is the essential necessity of law. Law, not modified, not controlled by love, becomes intolerable tyranny, insupportable oppression, brutal unreasoning cruelty, and both invites and necessitates revolt. David, who was in his own proper person the incarnation of law, declares, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." One needs but a superficial study of the old law to discover that this is the principle which holds the Jews together; they were held together in the ancient day by it; they are held together today by it. It is the love growing out of race, out of religion, moulding the family life, that has endured the testings of an infinite variety and number of persecutions, dispersions, hardships and uprootings. The law of God was the law of love from a beneficent ruler, the Father. The law, of necessity, created an atmosphere in which love thrives. Just as the domestic law requires a man to love his wife and the law of

patriotism requires him to love his country, the law in all true monotheistic religion requires one to love God and as a necessary spiritual corollary, to love his fellow-men.

There is an ancient legend that Abraham invited into his tent a man who at meal time gave no thanks to God for His mercy. Whereupon the patriarch drove him forth into the desert unfed and unsheltered. But in the night God touched Abraham and awoke him, saying to him, "Where is the stranger?" Abraham said, "When he did not fear you, nor thank you, I drove him forth." God rebuked him, saying, "Who made you his judge? I have borne with him all these years. Could you not bear with him one night? Have you learned nothing from my mercy to you?" It would be a miracle indeed if the love of God for a lost world begat no love in the hearts of those whom His love redeemed out of their lost estate and brought into fellowship with Himself, whether under the reign of law or by the operation of grace.

### WHAT THE NEW COMMANDMENT REQUIRES

The new commandment requires a new foundation—life, not law. It requires also a new interpretation—nature, not necessity; and a new application to the family and to the world. The love of the Christian toward God is born out of the love of God to Himself. Therefore, his love

toward his fellow-man flows out of the God-nature within himself. The new commandment concerns itself with the very foundations of his being; nothing else is consistent with his nature; nothing else truly expresses himself. Love is the very essence of his life. As it is the nature of the bird to sing, the flower to bloom, the sun to shine and the wind to blow, it is the nature of the Christian to love. His loving therefore is not the necessity of law, but the necessity of nature. It expresses itself in two directions, in beneficence toward the world, in kindly affection toward all other members of the household of faith. The bond of unity, the evidence of discipleship, the fruit of the Spirit, the kinship of family, all find their expression in obedience to that new commandment that we as Christians love one another. It was true in Him, therefore it must be true in us. He loved us, we ought also to love one another: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. He that hateth his brother is in the darkness and walketh in the darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes."

In the fourth chapter of this epistle, the inspired author exhorts us, "Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God. And every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God." Herein lies the evidence of the new birth, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love."

One cannot draw life from this divine source of life and not reproduce the life he receives, for all the life of the redeemed is by a channel of communication, a medium of transmission, a reflection of the life and light that are in Christ. As He is, so are we in the world. "Herein is love then, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Now the natural corollary of this miracle of mercy is this, "Beloved, if God so loved us we also ought to love one another."

There is an ancient legend that the Apostle John when too old to preach longer, used to have himself carried into the assembly of the saints and, looking around upon them, he was accustomed to repeat, "Little children, love one another." When asked one day, "Father, why do you always say that?" He answered, "In saying that I have said all, for love is all."

### DARKNESS IN CONTRAST TO THE LIGHT

To John the Apostle the whole world was divided into two realms—darkness and light. That is the final consideration of the present epistle. In the fifth chapter, nineteenth verse, he reminds us, "We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the evil one." There is the realm of darkness and the realm of light put in perfect contrast. The line of demarcation is sharp and accurate. There is no twilight zone in the spiritual world. Any one

who has traveled in the tropics knows how suddenly daylight is gone and darkness falls; no lingering of the light, no slow gathering of shadows—it is day, and it is night. So it is in the realm of spiritual and eternal life. There are no shadings off, a man is in the light or he is in the darkness until now. There are no easy grades out of life into death or out of death into life. One believes and lives, or disbelieves and perishes. "Light has shined into his heart to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Or, perishing, his eyes are blinded by the god of this world. Christ is the Light of the world. He lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and those who are willing to walk in the light have no need to stumble. One has seen a great ship in the darkness plowing its way into the harbour entering the city, and peering into the darkness, wondered at the things which surrounded, menacing the ship, or in turn were endangered thereby. Suddenly he has seen a great stream of the light from the searchlight flung from the prow of the ship out upon the bay. And in the light other ships are picked up, tugs and trawlers and tiny boats, floating débris, the flotsam and jetsam in the eddy of the ocean currents, and also the path of the ship is lighted through the darkness. How distinct the lines, how clearly and fully all things stand out in the light! How perfect the contrast between the light and the darkness! It is even so with the Lord

Jesus in the world, and with those who are His in this present age.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Consider the flood of light Christ and His Gospel throw upon the problems of this world. Consider in relation to these problems His own staggering statement concerning His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." Who, for instance, set the slavery question in the light? Who made it a moral question? Who made its ethical aspects transcend all the commercial and political interests? Who held it in the light until out of the dread turmoil and devastation of war the conscience of humanity emerged with a new understanding and a new liberty in relation thereto? Who taught William Lloyd Garrison the slogan which destroyed his own property and aroused the indignant opposition of more than one mob in Indianapolis and in Boston? Who set aflame the heart of the nation? Who indeed made him the flaming evangel of liberty, voicing the slogan, "Slavery is wrong and slavery must go"? Where in the Bible, for instance, is there any condemnation of slavery? It is there recognised as an institution among men. It is winked at in the days of man's ignorance, but when Christ came and began to bring men into a living fellowship with God, through Christ Himself bonds of brotherhood began to be forged that made slavery ultimately impossible. And just so certainly as the

ideals of Christ and the presence of Christ in His world were realised, the manacles must fall away from the hands and feet of the helpless, and the chains of slavery, though forged through countless centuries of custom, must be riven and the captives must be set free.

Who set the liquor question in the light if not Christ and His disciples? Who lifted it out of the realm of commerce and politics? Who revealed it a moral crime incapable of political justification? Who displayed its real character and declared every penny of its ill-gotten gains to be blood money? Who made it alike the responsible agent, and the instigator of vice, responsible for the degradation and death of countless men and women? Who stripped it of its garments of respectability, dislodged it from its entrenchments of legality, sheared it of its special privileges, denied its plea of personal liberty, tore from its hands its bill of special rights, stamped it with an ineradicable stigma of shame, whipped it by a relentless scourge of law out of court, and out of legalised existence? Who but Christ and His Church?

Who set the traffic in girls in the light and revealed to modern civilisation the shame of its heritage of lust? Who made the three hundred thousand girls in America who go down the scarlet way to the Pit every year, the wards of public conscience, the children of the pitying nation, the objects at once of our wrath and our rescue? Who,

but this Christ? It was in the light of His presence that shame became shameless and appetite indefensible and the body the sanctuary of the living God, whose defilement is blasphemy, whose degradation is treachery to God.

Who set the question of child labour in the light of public inspection? Who opened the doors of fast closed factories and brought forth the interminable stream of little children, manacled to machines as were the galley slaves to their oars? Who revealed their pale faces, their anemic blood, their stooped shoulders, their tubercular lungs, their stunted minds, their immoral lives, their ignorance, fear, disease, and the social disaster attendant upon their condition? Who made the nation see that in the question of the child's day of ten hours spent at the loom or the bench, the whole question of the integrity of the future generation, the happiness of the future homes, the morality and virtue and strength and efficiency, the life itself of the years to come—all these, and more—hinged? Who but Christ, who once stretched out His tender arms and lifted to His compassionate embrace little children, laid His hands upon their heads and blessed them, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not"? Whose stern voice arrayed at the bar of public condemnation the traffic in youth if not the voice of Him who said, "Woe unto him who causeth one of these little ones to stumble"? Thus calling to attention the con-

science of the world and setting its deeds in the light of His judgment!

Who set war in His merciless revealing light, took away from it its last vestige of justification, robbed it of its last specious and special plea? Who made it seem a damnable, as well as a horrible, thing to justify war on the ground of commerce, or colonisation, or race pride, or national ambition, or selfish interests, that grow out of such ambitions? Who revealed the fact to men that "war is hell" and that mothers' sons are not born to become fodder for cannon, victims of bloody hate and cruel slaughter, the foul offal of camp and battle, the refuse left in the field in the wake of famine and pestilence? Who but Him who ministered while He rebuked and blessed while He set in judgment its instigators? To whom can the nations reasonably look to end the reign of carnage and the orgy of death and the insanity of war, but to Him who is, and is to be, the Prince of Peace?

Yes, Christ has flung the light of His presence and of His Person upon the dark waters of the world, and the whole dark brood, the whole teeming, pulsing, throbbing, menacing brood of dangers born in and thriving upon the dark, suddenly stand out exposed by the light and to the light of His presence. Take this contrast, for instance. The world's great insistent demand is the demand for personal liberty. Behind it hide cruel greed and selfish indulgence and careless indifference and hard

oppression and tyrannies, with exploitation of the weak. Oh, language fails to enumerate the crimes that are committed in the name of personal liberty. Over against this plea of personal liberty on the part of the world and its darkness, is Christianity's urge of personal responsibility. The light of Christ sets upon me the necessity to keep myself pure and unselfish, and direct my activities along lines of altruism, to seek the world's betterment, to hold out to the blind the gift of sight, and to the deaf the opening of their ears, and to the lame the power to walk, and to the burdened my own shoulders girded to the task of bearing the burdens of others. The world claims its bill of rights and the exercise thereof. Christianity in utter contrast preaches its Gospel of righteousness. The world stumbles and staggers and falls in its philosophy of egoism, its idolatry of self. The Church, the Bride of Christ, walks and runs and soars on eagle's wings in its practice of altruism. The glory of the Christian and of the Christian Church is that self-emptying was learned from Him who counted it no prize to be on an equality with God but emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant.

### A PERSONAL APPLICATION

What is true of the social problems of the world is equally true of the personal ones. Christ lighteth every individual who comes into the world. He sets in the light man's standards of conduct, his

habits, attitudes, relations. And the inner promptings and searchings of the soul are for each of us constantly illuminated, revealed in Christ the Light. In His presence no man's coarse, selfish, sensuous nature can live. The whole foul brood of creeping things that comes out of moral darkness to shame us and cripple us and gnaw at the vitals of our integrity and undermine the structure of our spiritual building, slink away out of the life as His light is turned on.

I remember very well how, as a lad, I used to go and turn over a log or a board on the farm and watch with glee the worms and bugs and creeping foul things flee away before the light. They had flourished and fattened on the darkness; they died in, or fled from the light. So it is in the hearts of men; when the light comes in the evil things go out. The more light, the more clear the revelation of the things that are evil. The more light, the more power to put away the things that are evil. That is why the heart of man once illumined by the living, loving, life-giving presence of the Christ of God can never be happy in the darkness again, nor yet be satisfied with the amount of light received. The soul of one illumined by Christ's presence within joins the ranks of the insatiable and cries with the thirsty land and the burning fire, and the barren womb, "Give! Give!" No man has ever yet had enough of Christ, for while He rebukes, He reveals; while He

wounds, He heals; while He condemns, He cures; while He searches, He saves. When He comes He communicates of the life of God. In His presence life expands and deepens and becomes ever more capable of taking hold of, entering into, possessing, appropriating, employing the Divine life. What else can we do as children of the light than turn to the light and walk in the light and consent to no darkness at all in the lives we now live by the faith in the Son of God?

### CONTRASTS BETWEEN HATE AND LOVE

The command to love is in utter contrast to the darkness and its controlling principle of hate—another name for selfishness. The whole spirit of Christianity and of Christ is contrary to the principle of the darkness; *i. e.,* the natural man. The unregenerate man is at war with the spiritual man. "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God." It cannot be. The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit. The Christian principle of love is the expression of God in the life of the saints. As such, it is that light which is at war with the non-Christian darkness, the spirit of hate. Selfishness is hate; self-interest, self-seeking, self-centeredness, are all antagonistic to God and indifferent to man. They are all of the evil one who prompted Cain to deify himself in self-reliance against God and in arrogant superiority to his brother. It was this which led him at last

to slay his brother because his own deeds were evil and his brother's deeds were righteous. The very best expression of the non-Christian world has no word of love in the Christian sense. Christ asked Peter three times, "Lovest thou me?" Twice He used the word that lifted love into the realm of the ethical and the spiritual. Thrice Peter answered with the word which held it to the basis of human relationship and left God crowded beneath the threshold of human consciousness in this divinest of all life expressions.

The best the pagan world could give of love was the love born of the flesh and therefore of the earth earthy. This is revealed in the pagan philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and Philo, and in Neo-Platonism. Pagan literature, both Greek and Roman, have no hint of a love qualified by the spirit as essence of the very nature of God. Pagan art, whether expressing itself in chiselled stone or painted canvas, in its highest embodiment of beauty and virtue misses the spiritual love which is pure and undefiled. No, the darkness of the world about us is like a great desert waste. The sands of human life are there, choked with the alkali of human sin, without refreshing springs of virtue, without the protecting shade of trees of righteousness. But love, a divine stream, flows forth from the smitten Rock opened upon Calvary across the desert waste and while it loses itself in the desert sands of the wilderness of human life and the darkness of the

world, it brings fecundity to the desert. Gardens blossom, fields are made fruitful and the valley of weeping becomes the place of springs. What has not the stream of Christian love borne to the spiritually arid and waste world? Everything we call spirituality, all that we name charity, the whole conception of brotherhood, everything embraced in missions.

Yon lonely man in the barren room on his knees before a rough table, hands clasped over an open manuscript, face lifted up to God with a great light upon it, cheeks bathed with tears copiously flowing from glad eyes, tells the story of the first translation of the New Testament Scriptures into Chinese. How came Robert Morrison there? How had he endured the toils, labours, trials, the heartbreak of loneliness, the sickness, the persecution and yet had adhered with steadfastness of purpose to his task until it was done? Naught else can explain it save that the love of Christ constrained him. How came he to know the love of Christ? There is a story, at least, that one young woman three times bought a new suit of clothes and clothed this Robert Morrison, the fighting, ragged urchin of the streets, in decency, and loved him into a Bible School where at last she led him to Christ and taught him the Word of God. How came she to do it? Simply that she, too, was constrained by the love of Christ. And the woman's love brought the love of God to a man's heart and that man's love

brought the love of God to a lost nation with its four hundred million souls, a million of whom go down into the darkness of death each month in each year.

How came Father Damien to make himself an outcast from men that he might become the messenger of hope to leper colonies? Not the spirit nor self-interest of this world; not the earthiness of a godless civilisation, but the constraining love of the compassionate Christ.

What was it that moved upon the heart of Judson, facing the impregnable rock of heathenism, enabling him to respond in answer to the query, "what of the prospects?" when there had been no results for seven years: "The prospects are as bright as the promises of God"?

Not alone has the stream of Christian love borne into the darkness of the world what we call spirituality, what we name charity, what we conceive as brotherhood, what we imply in missions, but also every eleemosynary institution and every movement of mercy the world knows flourish upon the waters of its flowing.

There sat in the gallery of my church, one Lord's day, thirty children without homes, without parents, without the tender affection belonging by right to childhood. How came they there? Why were our hearts moved and our eyes tear-dimmed as we looked upon them? Why was there that swelling tide of emotion? They were there because Christ

loved us and taught us to love the helpless, the needy, the orphan, because we rendered service to Him in building our orphanage and adopting these children as the children of our church.

### AN INCREDIBLE CREED

What other Gospel ever preached such an unthinkable creed as "Love your enemies"? I have been told that on a battlefield of the Civil War a Union soldier lay dying. He opened his eyes at the touch of a hand. For an hour amidst the rain of leaden death he had cried piteously for water. His parched lips and his feeble strength combined to make the cry constantly more and more feeble. Then there came the touch. An arm was slipped around his neck, his head was lifted, a canteen was put to his parched lips and the grateful and refreshing water flowed over his lips and tongue. When he opened his eyes they fell upon the uniform of Confederate gray. Relieved of his thirst, comforted of his pain, gasping still, however, in his weakness, in deepest emotion he whispered, "The uniform of an enemy; the heart of a Christian!" Ah, yes! That stream of love flows even into the battle-torn field of war and overleaps the barriers that hate builds between men and nations.

What other Gospel has as its central creed "GIVE"? No world philosophy knows it, for the creed of this world is "GET." Where else in all past ages are we able to find service the mark of

greatness, or the leaders of the movement its servants, its ministers? Or who can parallel the creed that makes humility the mark of nobility, and promises the possession of the earth to the meek?

Love is God's beacon light showing in the darkness its rays of mercy, compassion, kindness, gentleness, forbearonce, service, comfort, hope, encouragement.

Love is the Christian's shield against hate, persecution, misunderstanding, defamation, hardness, coldness and moral stupidity.

Love is the world's star of hope to guide it out of its slough of despond, out of its prison of despair, out of its pit of death, out of its burden of doubt, out of its death of desire, out of its hopeless darkness into the light and liberty and life of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

Love never fails.

# V

## THE TRINITY OF THIS WORLD

*"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."*—I JOHN 2:15-17.

"LOVE not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." It would be profitable to read in connection with that verse this other, from the third chapter of Colossians, "Set your mind on things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died and your life is hid with Christ in God." So, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In other words, unless one is dead he is not alive. You have to die in order to live. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone." "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life is not of the

Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The path to eternal life is through the grave of your dead self. I think you will not understand fully the significance of that saying unless you are reminded that its eternal duration is altogether dependent upon its eternal quality. Eternal life lasts for ever because it has the quality of eternity in it. The gift of God is the nature of God, that is, eternal life; and the nature of God is inherently eternal and therefore the new nature of children of God we have as believers in Christ is eternal, because it is of the eternal nature of God. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; he that loveth the world is not of the Father."

The Lord Jesus Christ came to this world to give us peace with God. That peace can only be described as "The peace that passeth understanding." It cannot be defined any more than light can be defined, any more than pure water can be defined. It has length and height and depth and breadth, and so surpasses the three dimensions of known mathematics. It is illimitable, indefinable, spiritual. It is as gentle as the dew distilled in the evening air; it is as silent as the light; it is as incomprehensible as any of the elementally eternal things are incomprehensible. Peace as a conscious possession is an experience against which there is no gainsaying. It is an experience in which man finds his

satisfaction of soul and his eternal rest. This is peace with God. Christ not alone gives us peace, but Christ *is* our peace.

It is equally true, however, that the Lord Jesus Christ came to give men conflict with the world and to set a man at variance with his environment, with his circumstances, and with the world in the midst of which he must live out his life. Men misunderstood Him when He first came, and hung upon His words as if He were one whose ministry and whose message could bring immediate peace to the world. But in Matt. 10:34 he suddenly announces His program as one not of peace but of a sword: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And then He flings forth His terrible challenge to all men: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." When the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, comes to write that terrible twin-catalogue of human activities, one labeled the "works of the flesh" and the other "the fruit of

the Spirit," he introduces them by saying, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh." And these two are at war, each against the other.

So also James reaches the extreme of utterance when he says, "Friendship of the world is enmity with God." The Christian who practices love for the world, practices spiritual adultery, and thereby becomes the enemy of God. There can be no sharper conflict than this which the Master, Himself, projects into our lives. The world and its love are utterly antagonistic to the Father and His love, and he who loves the world has not the love of the Father. The attitude of the Christian to the world must be the attitude of the land to the sea. You can never stand by the seaside, with that thought in mind, without seeing something of the significance of that spiritual struggle which is going on in the world of men. The sea is constantly coming up and encroaching on the land. The waves seem ever to come with new strength and new persistency of purpose with each rising tide to engulf the land. I never stand on the seashore but that I feel that some time the sea will rise and engulf the whole land and take us all in. And the land is ever setting its bounds, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further." And the land is reaching out its arms to take possession of the territory of the sea and seeking constantly by the settling down of débris, putting down of seeds and accumulations of soils, to

make new land and to take possession of that which is of the sea, and to hold its own by increasing its possessions, in its ever renewed conflict with the sea. Now I suppose there is no divorcement of the two from that age-long struggle; the old struggle will go on, the sea seeking to engulf the land and the land the sea. And there will be no victory. There is to be no end to that conflict till there is "no more sea."

So must the Christian live in the world beside men who are out of God. And the world will ever be gathering its strength and renewing its efforts to overwhelm the Christian body. The world will constantly seek to overwhelm and submerge the Christian and the Christian Church. And the one attitude of the Christian is to set his standards, and say to the world as it encroaches upon his life, "Hitherto shalt thou come but no further." Here are ideals and conceptions; here are principles and convictions; here are conducts and attitudes; here are spiritual understandings and perceptions; here are imperative laws of life that you must stop short of laying your hand upon.

There is a spiritual conflict inevitable to every believer in Christ. He may—indeed he must—panoply himself with the whole armour of God; the shield of faith; the breastplate of righteousness; the helmet of salvation; the girdle of truth; the sword of the Spirit. He must be ready at all times to resist the wiles and the assaults of the devil. He

will not be delivered, however, from conflict by any perfection of spiritual preparation against evil. He must be for ever both on the defensive and on the offensive. He is surrounded by spiritual forces in opposition to the Christ under whose sovereign lordship the Christian lives as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. There are principalities and powers, there are spiritual forces of wickedness in high places, who oppose all that is of God, and seek by every possible means to seduce the Christian from his allegiance to the Kingdom of Heaven, or to destroy him so that he cannot serve the Divine Master under whose banner his faith enlists him. The Christian had as well understand at once there can be no compromise, no question as to the Person to whom he gives allegiance. He has enlisted for the duration of the war even as he presents his body a living sacrifice, a reasonable service, unto God.

As I go on in my own conflict of life and in enlarged observation of human life, I believe that the one course of safety for the child of God is to have absolute standards from which he never swerves under any circumstances. He must have standards of conduct. He must have principles governing his actions. He must have principles governing his relations. He must have a constant attitude, God enlightened, God inspired, from which he never varies. More and more one sees that in Christ compromises are impossible. In Christ there is no

possibility of adjustment of life outside of its own realm. Christ has brought us into a spiritual realm wherein all adjustments must be made. That is the most difficult thing for a man to do and retain the law of love. To be temperate and godly and yet to be firm. Oh, what a task the Master has given us! To be like adamant in our principles and standards, and yet to have the heart of God's compassion in all our earthly relations. To be firm against men while loving them and convincing them of our love even while we resist their principles and refuse utterly to conform to their standards.

We must use the world as well as live in contact with it. There are thousands of directions in which the world must at our hands be made to serve God's ends. Its material resources, its varied organisations of government, its customs, its laws, its social institutions, the very things that make our temptations, are the things that we must use for God in discharging the duties and obligations He has given us in the world.

But as Christians, while we use and live alongside the world, we must so far resist the world and its spirit, as never to succumb to the spirit of the world, nor permit ourselves to be swerved by it or submerged in it.

Here eternal vigilance is the price of victory. There is the constant subtilty of address; the constant pressure of its demands; the unceasing though often invisible and intangible approach; the un-

varying plausibility of its appeals; the seeming justice of its claims; the moral correctness of its standards; the social privilege so generally and generously given; its standards, customs and conventions; the winsomeness and reasonableness of its spirit; all things combine to make an atmosphere and create a force that speaks with fair words often all but irresistible even to the most discerning of God's children. Satan would if it were possible deceive the very elect, and the very elect are often brought seriously near the border line of spiritual delusion. Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to obeying the injunction of the Master who, seeing our dangers, ever warned through His exhortation to His disciples, " What I say unto you I say unto all: watch."

What is this world? The term as here used means simply the mass of humanity at variance with God, that spirit of the age which is antagonistic to God, all those institutions that neglect God and rule Him out of conscience and consciousness of men. The world of humanity without God, without Christ, and without hope. The world is interpreted as embracing all the mass of men whose habits, conduct, spirit and institutions are neglectful of, and so at variance with, the eternal God. It is that which we are called upon by the Spirit of the living God to hold ourselves aloof from; not to love; not to permit our hearts to be entangled in; not to permit our spirits to

take partnership with; not to permit our interest to be entangled with its schemes, its purposes or its programs.

He who loves the world is doomed to disappointment. Sometimes we think that the highest spiritual exhortations are so far up in the air that they do not come to the ordinary man. I found myself wondering if it would not be so with this; if some of you would not be saying, "This text sounds well, but we have to live in the world. We are still limited with the limitations of our humanity. We cannot break with all the institutions and associations, with all the spirit of the world. It is the one thing we must go on with if we live in peace. We cannot get out of this world." Then God seems to thrust upon us that very thought, His own great practical exhortation. If you do not wish to doom yourself to disappointment you must not tie yourself to the world for the life of the world will not abide. "The world passeth away, and all the things that are in the world pass away." And he who loves the world and gives himself to it will find after a while that "his way gives out." No more striking statement of this fact can be found than that fearful warning of the first Psalm—The way of the wicked giveth out. It is the thought of one coming to a precipice, and while feeling himself secure, stepping over and out into emptiness. He goes down and down and in the great reach of experience beyond his final step, there is nothing

for him. "The world passes away" and he who ties his heart to the world is doomed to eternal disappointment.

Nor is it so impracticable and so far beyond present experience but that he is doomed to present disappointment. The saddest man in all this world is a man who has given his life to this world and has weighed it and proved it and experienced it and found its disappointment at last. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? Or how shall he buy it back at the last?" I have heard men preach evangelistic sermons on that text but I am not sure it is meant for an evangelistic text. "What shall a man give in exchange for his life?" He is God's man and he has spent his life not in the service of God, not with God above the threshold of consciousness, guiding, directing, controlling, not in realisation of the eternal possession. He has given himself to pursuit of this world, its pleasures, its pomp, its power, and now life is gone, and all the building of his life is a disappointment, for he finds all the house of his life crumbling about him. Oh! I would build more wisely! For there is no chance to buy back this life and build it all over again. I saw a man who found it was not at all suitable for his purpose to live for God, so he invested his life in other ways, and he cursed the day that made him choose such an investment. If men give themselves to this world, when they have finished with

the world, they will find that the world will be chaff and that they will have nothing then, and no power to buy life and opportunity back and no time to build more wisely.

Poor old Solomon, the most conspicuous figure of failure the world has ever seen! When he had gained all he possessed, crying at the last in face of the riches that flowed in the streets of Jerusalem, of the greatness that came to him on the throne of Israel; of the wisdom that was of this world; and of the reputation for wisdom that was world-wide; and of the pleasure that came to him in the indulgence of appetite, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Here is utter and absolute contrast: the one perishes, the other abides. Certain minor incidents in the life of the Master are of tremendous interest. One of them is a little phrase and yet it has challenged and interested me. "It was winter and Jesus walked in Solomon's porch." It seems just to have been thrust in, "It was winter and Jesus walked in Solomon's porch." That broad porch of the Temple had endured in spite of the destructions of time and of hostile men and elements, and had been rebuilt by Herod, who reproduced its ancient perfections. "And Jesus walked in Solomon's porch." See the meekest of all the men of the earth, walking by the side of the most prideful! See the poorest man who ever lay down to sleep on a borrowed couch, or sought a borrowed tomb in which

to be buried, walking by him who rode in a royal palanquin made of gold and silver and ornamented with precious stones, the object of the love of countless women. See Solomon in constant contrast to Him who sought a throne by the way of self-emptying; see Jesus on the way to the Cross, walking with him who denied the cross in all his experience and who had seized a throne for himself and made life one constant revelry of self-indulgence. See Him whose wisdom was not of this world walking beside him whose wisdom, God-given at first, had been prostituted to his own use. See them as they stand together in the porch which Solomon builded and in which Jesus walked, in utter contrast as to the spiritual principles dominating them.—Jesus going down to failure, and Solomon going up to success. The one finding the road to the Cross and the other finding the road to the throne. The one sealed in a tomb which endures to this day. The Other sealed in a tomb which angels' hands opened. The one held by a death whose bonds he could not break. The Other breaking the bonds of death which could not hold Him.

To make Jesus Christ the object of our love and God the supreme passion of our lives, to make Him the source and aim and purpose of life, is to gain for ourselves an eternal and abiding joy. A life like that will grow deeper as the stream flowing toward the sea grows deeper. It will gather from

every little hill of life and from every field and every valley through which it passes, the débris of other lives and the deepening channel will deposit at last the great spiritual delta at the mouth of eternity, the delta of service and of joy. A life like that will have virtue and will ever grow stronger as it thrusts down its roots to take hold of the soil in which it lives, as some giant tree is strengthened with each passing year. That life will be purer as it breathes the exalted air of the upper currents in which it comes to abide. That life will somehow overcome in its progress all the obstructions that stand in its path and rising above them all, will soar on wings as eagles to the skies of eternal life, eternal purity, eternal power. What wonderful things we have had promised us as Christians! When the earth melts with fervent heat and the heavens are rolled away as a scroll, we shall endure. And all that is demanded of us is that we shall do the will of God in the energy of the Holy Spirit, as He provides that energy and that power, day by day.

### THE TRINITY OF THIS WORLD

Now, I would like briefly to define the love of the world. What is the love of the world? What is this thing that we are warned against by the Holy Spirit? There is a Trinity of Evil: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life.

### THE LUST OF THE FLESH

What is the lust of the flesh? It has an ugly sound, and it is an ugly thing. But it is not necessarily the thing to which your mind instinctively turns. Matthew Henry says that it is perhaps nothing more nor less than desire. I am inclined to agree. Desire for luxury, the love of creature comforts, the love of the thing that takes care of this natural man. I am perfectly sure that the Spirit of God is not warning against natural life, but life denaturalised by sin, its natural appetites in the ascendant, above God, above self-mastery. It is the life that a man lives when the body is his master. When ease and comfort cry out against duty, and prevail. It is the appeal of the comfortable room, and the quiet hour with its delicious warmth and delightful associations and fellowship therein, or of the good book and musical instruments and very charming players thereon, while without is the storm and the streets filled with snow and winds that bite like blistering fire itself. And all the comforts of the room make appeal against the discomforts, the threatened disasters, the dangers of the outside world. The easy chair by the soft light and the good book and the good fellowship of that room and the comfortable warmth of it say persuasively, "Enjoy yourself, sit yourself down in this hour, and abide in comfort."

But stirring uneasily in my heart is the cry of another's poverty. Yonder, away in a cheerless

room is an old man, and a woman who watches by his side. There is poverty and frailty and loneliness. There is nothing in the larder. And I could relieve them and I am constrained by the love of Christ to brave the storm and administer my comfort to that cheerless home. And I am persuaded to sit in silence and refuse to go because I pet and pamper this body that cries for comfort. Out yonder a man stands alone for Christ, He is under reproach and in difficult circumstances and is about to fail. I am called to go and stand by his side, perhaps bear his reproach, certainly to feel his pinch of necessity a bit, that his necessity may be relieved. And my flesh cries out against the sacrifice of service and I am persuaded to comfort myself and let him as a servant of God fail, or be hindered in his service, because I indulge myself. It is the desire to be well fed and well clothed and well housed and to find comfortable circumstances and joyous associations when these stand in the way of duty—that is the lust of the flesh.

I remember perfectly a morning in one of the most delightfully hospitable, and one of the most richly sumptuous homes I have ever known. A woman fifty-five years of age drew her chair a bit away from the table and said to me when I sat as her guest in her home, "I want to tell you something if you will let me. I have never opened my heart to any human being before. I feel today that I must." She said, "I became a Christian as a

young girl. At least I united with the Church. I was in the heart of a great Southern city. Naturally I was in an atmosphere of indulgence. Pleasure was our god and the pursuit of pleasure my ruling passion." She said, "For all these years I have pursued pleasure. I have denied myself no indulgence that might bring happiness or comfort. I have aspired to social leadership and found it. I married a man of wealth. You have seen my home and my splendid young son. Now life is largely behind me and all this is nothing. I realise that the years have been empty and barren and my self-indulgence has robbed me of everything worth while in God's universe. I am an empty-handed, disappointed old woman." And I saw God Almighty suddenly illuminate that life and take away the bitterness of its failure. She said, "*I cannot buy back the years.* I can never regain its opportunities, but the remainder of my strength shall be yielded to His service." I saw the peace and the joy come into her heart and face. She was given a new association, a new purpose and a new and present passion for righteousness and truth in her daily life. She had been betrayed all her life by this lust of the flesh, for the lust of the flesh is not necessarily a thing of the gutter, or the dens of vice. It is not necessarily clothed in scarlet rags. But it is always the thing which is of the essence of the self life, crying out against the essence of God's life in the child of God. God, finding no

better way for His Son than the way of the Cross, can find no better way than the way of the cross for me. And self, turning away from obedience to the call of the cross is obedient to the lust of the flesh.

### THE LUST OF THE EYES

The lust of the eyes—ambition. Over and over again, young men say to me, "I cannot see any harm in the thing you seem to think is hurtful. I cannot see why I should deny myself." I am inclined to ask you, "Do you not wish you could see? Did it ever occur to you that you cannot see some things because the god of this world has blinded your eyes to the thing you cannot see?" A man said to me in cold, dead, serious, reasonable earnestness, "Whatever a man wants and makes the supreme desire of his life, the supreme ambition of his life, that is his god." He went on to illustrate: "If my supreme ambition is to make money, then the ambition to make money is righteously God to me." If that ambition is god to him he was speaking far more truly than he realised, and with a far more desperate significance than he understood. The ambition of the man may in reality be the idolatry of the man, for an idol is anything that has a larger formative influence in the life than Jesus Christ has. And idolatry is any worship that supremely commands the allegiance of your heart and the exercise of your strength in its service.

Here is the appeal to the æsthetic. All the desirable things of life! Eve looked upon the tree of knowledge and saw that it was desirable to be obtained. The natural side of life in its cultural expression! The whole spirit of display, the lust of desire and the lust of achievement, the lust for rewards and emoluments and decorations, the vainglory of this world, the desire to have men applaud and approve and the desire to obtain prominence and take the place of leadership! How plain—how common it all is!

In my early ministry a wise, old minister of Christ stripped my own soul bare when he said to me, "My son, beware of the devil. He is very keen; he is seductively plausible; and he will make you see things that are not as if they were." Then he said to me, "Do you know I know of no finer evidence that a man is an idolator than his attitude toward his daily newspaper. Let a Christian man attend some convention or assembly of which there is an account in next day's newspaper. Now when he sees the newspaper he runs straight down the column first *to see what is said of himself*. That is idolatry of self! the essence of worldly ambition, a carnal thirsting and lusting for human praise." He said, "Let the minister preach a sermon and nothing seems to be accomplished. Reviewing the whole thing he begins to wonder how this impressed the people, and how that impressed them. It is all of the devil. When you have lived your

life in the consciousness of the fulfilment of God's call to you, leave the results with God—that is faith and nothing else is faith. And no ambition can possibly be tolerated with God that is not born of a will subjected to God, enthroned over self." Take that fearful word in the sixth chapter of Genesis, "My spirit shall not always rule in man, for in his going astray he is flesh," *i. e.,* he is carnal. Crowding God beneath the threshold of consciousness, putting God in second place, giving other ambitions than the desire to please Him, other desires, other pursuits, the pre-eminence. Robbing Christ of the pre-eminence in His universe, in the human life, in the church, in the world—that is the pride of the eyes. It is pre-eminently knowledge, the poor paltry human knowledge that we set against the wisdom of God. That is the lust of the eyes, the ambition to put self in the pre-eminent place of Christ.

### THE VAINGLORY OF LIFE

There are three of these things; two the lust of desire and the third the lust of possession, the vainglory of life. Pride of my place, of my prestige, of my possession, of my power, and of my pull. Ah! the subtilty of it; the Satanic, soul-destroying subtilty of it! Some commentator has said that a minister of Christ will tell of some manifest presence of God and the joy he has in soul-winning and make it a boast for himself while he is doing it.

It is dead easy to do that, thus fulfilling the lust, the vainglory of life. He preaches the name of Christ for the purpose of self praise. He yields his powers to propagate the Gospel truth and exploit himself in doing it. Money, and place, and honour, and titles, and knowledge, and possessions, are just soap bubbles in the spiritual economy of God. Vanity! Vanity! Vanity!

One morning shortly after the flood in Dayton, in 1913, I went into one of the many homes of my church that had been overwhelmed with the muddy waters of the Miami. I saw the rooms I had seen once or twice before in their wonderful beauty and charm, now utterly ruined; the rich carpets destroyed, the tapestry bedraggled and soiled, the piano cracking apart, scores of pieces of bric-a-brac just a mass of rubbish. The charming matron of that home had herself with her own hand carved the woodwork for its twenty-eight rooms. She was a skilled worker in brass, a connoisseur of art and a rarely gifted musician. What a woman she was with her wealth and position and leisure! Gathering out of all the lands of the world the unusual things, she had brought them all back and built them all into her house with an inordinate pride of possession. That morning as we stood there in her wrecked home, she looked at it all and said, "Junk! Junk! I feel as if I would like to kick it all to pieces and never find it again even in the range of my thought." Gone in one dreadful

night, the labour of a life, for she had given herself to it. But with its going, alas, the pride that had made it, did not go.

One of my friends in America, a very distinguished preacher, after a most humiliating experience said, "I am greatly humiliated; I fear I am not humbled." It was his humbling, not his humiliation, that God wanted out of that experience. It was his ability to die to the world, to mortify his flesh in the world, which the Master sought for his good. For it is the humbled heart that walks with God and finds His favour in daily experience. How shall we do it? You are living six days in the week in contact with this world. You must live in the same office, in the same home, with worldly people. Are you to be for ever in conflict with the world? Are you to be going about with a spiritual chip on your shoulder? Is that what this means? Not altogether, and yet somewhat. I can conceive a girl living in an office with a man trying to seduce her away from her virtue, until his seductions influence her and force her away from her purity. I can see that the world is seeking constantly to seduce you away from God. But I think there is a way that we might understand how to resist and a way in which we might obtain wisdom. I took down from my shelf a book and looked up the name of William Crawford Gorgas. For of all his great work in connection with the American Government, the greatest is that bit of work in 1900-1902. I had

lived in Florida. I had seen the terrible cloud of danger and fear rise out of the Southern seas. I had gone through one or two epidemics of yellow fever and when William Crawford Gorgas found in the city of Havana the nest of pernicious disease spreading itself over all the South country, he said, "There is a remedy. We cannot be fighting epidemic after recurring epidemic. We cannot be bringing in constantly doctors and quarantining cities and counties and states." One day he said, "This is what we will do. There is the seat of the pest yonder in Morro Bay." That bay had an inlet but no outlet. He dug away the other end of the bay and turned the great tides of the gulf through and swept with the ocean tides Morro Bay's filth and uncleanness into the sea. Thus he brought to Cuba permanent liberation from the yellow fever plague.

Thus, once for all, the Christian may turn the tides of God's love through his own heart and life in so rich and deep a current as to sweep out the nesting desires of worldliness, all sympathy with its idols, standards and associations, and thus make himself immune from the temptations and dangers of all his earthly contacts. This thought is perhaps better illustrated in the ancient mythological story of the men who, following the coast-line of Southern Europe in the day of the myths, would hear the siren's song. When they heard the voice of the sirens they would cease rowing and would land, and go up to their destruction. One day a wise

leader of men came and as they approached the coast where the sirens sang, he melted wax and stuffed the ears of his boatmen, then applauded himself for his wisdom. But some of the wax fell out and some of the sirens' music reached their ears and they rowed in to their death just the same. But a wiser leader came, who, knowing that he must pass the seat of the sirens, brought into his boat with him Orpheus, whose music once

> "Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
> And made hell grant what love did seek."

And as Orpheus sang the boat passed the sirens' seat in safety. His men were saved by the expulsive power of a new and higher affection.

Turn through your heart the ocean tide of God's love and life, and you will never miss the allurements of the world. Bring into your boat of life the Great Companion and your spirits will not be seduced with the spirits of this world: nor can the sirens' song of sin come in such dulcet tones as to make sin seem holiness. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

# VI

## THE ANTICHRIST

*"Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour."*—I JOHN 2: 18.

*"And now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him."*—I JOHN 2: 28, 29.

PERHAPS no word in all this Epistle is more difficult of interpretation or has given more trouble to the commentators than this statement of John—"It is the last hour." It has been the occasion for stumbling and men of every mind question whether John was inspired of the Spirit of God when he wrote it, or whether being inspired he was not mistaken in what he wrote. No interpreter of God's truth needs to find any further explanation than an explanation that may explain. That is all that is necessary. I am profoundly convinced that what John meant to say is embraced in the conception that the first Epistle of John was the last Scripture written. John is telling the Christian how to live in human society. The last word that

needs to be said to any group is to tell the people how to conduct themselves under the circumstances of daily life so as to live in consonance with their character or the principles of their institution. It is the last time that inspiration will speak; it is the last hour in which God will direct the inspired Word to men and therefore they are to give heed with peculiar interest and responsibility to what he now writes.

Some time ago when I was traveling on a railroad train a white-aproned waiter from the dining car came through my coach announcing luncheon. I had inside information that it was lunch time, but remembering the size of my pocketbook and the prices charged for even simple necessities on the dining car of railroad trains, I drew up my belt a notch and waited. Three quarters of an hour later he came again calling, now, "Second call for luncheon." Again I waited in the hope that my appetite would make fewer demands later on. I was in that state of mind of the Confederate soldier whom General Lee found up a persimmon tree outside Petersburg during the siege of that city. Said the general to the soldier, "My poor man, has it come to this that you get no rations but green persimmons?" "No, general," said the soldier, "I am not making my rations off of these green persimmons. I am only eating them to draw up my stomach to the size of my rations." In this spirit I waited, but half an hour later the waiter returned

the third time calling, "Last call for luncheon." I immediately called him to me and asked, "Do you mean to say that the dining car will close immediately?" To which he answered, "Oh, no, sir, you can get served for two hours yet. This is only the last warning." Then I understood. And I also understand John's "last hour." It is the last warning, it is the last time the Holy Spirit will put the pen of inspiration into the hand of man. All the forces for, and against the Christ are lined up now. The conflict will simply go on between the two until the Master comes again, thus ending all conflict in His reign of righteousness and peace.

It is as if a lawyer were preparing his last argument; he has come to his last point; he has summoned his witnesses and examined their testimony; he has prepared his brief, made his argument, he has stated the case and adduced his conclusions. Now he reaches the last hour, his "finally"; sums up the case and leaves it with the jury and awaits the verdict, always conscious that back of his plea and back of the verdict of the jury stands the judge who may set aside the verdict of the jury. John has presented his case in the preceding chapters of this epistle: Jesus as the eternal life. He has summoned his witnesses to the fact that eternal life is in the world, that that eternal life is manifested in Jesus of Nazareth who was Himself the manifestation of God. Having summoned the

witnesses, he has put them on the stand, and taken their testimony; he has made his argument. He is summing up now, and is about to leave his case with the jury. The great Judge stands ready to give final sentence and pass final judgment. *This is the last hour; this is the final word.* We have now lined up the two forces. On the one hand all that has been set forth to prove that Jesus is God; on the other the sin of denial of Christ and all the course of this world in antagonism to the testimony submitted by John are now set in opposition each to the other.

Who are the witnesses whose testimony is presented?

First, there is God, the Father. Then there are the eye-witnesses who bore testimony. On the other hand, is the god of this world and the antichrist, who is to be revealed under the developing interest and power of the god of this world.

### THE TESTIMONY OF GOD

There is need to listen to the testimony which God the Father brings concerning His Son Jesus. That testimony is borne in a variety of ways. First it is brought through angels. There was the angelic host making announcement of His birth. So great was the significance of that birth to the angelic hosts that they could not contain themselves in heaven, so breaking through the heavenly restraint they crowded along the highways of the

upper air singing "And on earth peace among men, in whom he [God] is well pleased," they announced to the waiting shepherds that there was born unto them in Bethlehem "a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." God bore testimony through His angels.

But not content with the angelic voices, He spoke thrice in His own audible voice commending to men His Son, only begotten and well beloved. Once, at His baptism, He voiced from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." On that day when the Greeks came to Jesus the voice from heaven spoke again in answer to the Master's prayer that God should glorify Himself in Him. And the voice from heaven answered, "I have both glorified my name and will glorify it again."

So also on the great occasion, when, upon the Mount of Transfiguration the glory of the divine indwelling broke through, till the very garments of the Son of God were glistering white because of the all-perfect unity of His holy life, God spake again, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Not alone in audible voice but through manifest miracles the Father bore witness to the Son. In Acts 2:22 this express significance is given to the supernatural works of the Lord Jesus, for it is written therein, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst

of you." Beginning at Cana with the turning of water into wine, and ending at the Garden with the raising of the dead, by many signs and wonders God declared Jesus of Nazareth to be God the Son. There were the gifts of sight to the blind, or hearing to the deaf, of health to the sick. He exercised power over demons, He made the lame to walk, He put heart and cheer and courage and hope into the hearts of the poor while preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to them. The sign-working testimony did not cease with His death, His own resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven were but further proofs of God's attestation of Him as God the Son. So also since His ascension God had so wrought through the Holy Spirit in the name of Christ by the hands of His disciples that new witness was constantly borne to the power of the Name that is above every name. The deity of Christ had been demonstrated in His bodily resurrection from the dead and in the spiritual resurrection experience of His disciples. The eternal life had come to be their portion. These were the men who out of an abundant experience both of observation of, and personal union with, the Lord Jesus bore personal testimony concerning Him.

### TESTIMONY OF EYE-WITNESSES

Those early disciples became, therefore, living witnesses concerning the facts of the life, and the

significance of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They brought the evidences of their five senses; they had seen, heard and handled Him. They had been appointed by the Master at the beginning of His ministry to accompany Him. They had examined His works, observed His life, seen His death, marveled at His resurrection, and, finally, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, had come to interpret these facts as the manifestation of eternal life made available to men. On the testimony of their five senses they declared Him to be God, and therefore eternal life. In their testimony there is an exultant glory of fellowship, for in Christ they have become at one with God.

One day after preaching on one of the great themes of the Divine witness to Christ with the believer, a simple-hearted woman came to me and said, "I cannot tell it as you tell it, but I know it in my heart. I have had the glorious, blessed experience of the wondrous things you have been talking about. I have the testimony of the Christ yonder, and of the Christ in the Book, and of the Christ in my own heart."

That is the great plea John makes as he sets forth the witnesses. This testimony of theirs has been wrought into a Divine experience. They have passed out of the old experience into a new experience. The old creation has passed away, all things are become new. It is not the province of Christ in this world to exalt nor to reform the old nature.

He puts aside the old nature. He re-establishes a divine power and gives an entirely new nature through the imparted Spirit of God.

Now, contrary to this testimony of the Father is the testimony of the god of this world. He denies the experience of the saints, and the testimony of the Father, and in a variety of ways seeks to make the world believe that the old nature is all right and there is no need of a new nature. Here is the one great battlefield, the one great controversy, the one great conflict. The spirit of antichrist has been concerned through all the centuries to make it appear that Jesus Christ is a mere man and as a mere man cannot reveal nor communicate God to man. Satan set himself to destroy Him while He was in the earth. He began in Bethlehem of Judæa when he sent all the babes to their death in a vain effort to destroy Him. His opposition culminated in the Cross when He hung a guiltless Man upon that Cross and thrust Him down into death and the grave. That Satanic effort culminated in the Cross and made the world a partner in the tragic crime, the supreme perfidy of all the ages. He opposed Him by making himself the god of this world. As the god of this world, he has given its standards, its ideals, its customs, its policies, its politics to men in order that he may gather to himself all men, and hold them to himself against Christ.

I think that when Satan came to this world God appointed him to direct worship to Himself. (See

Ezekiel, chap. 38.) The business for which Satan was created was that he might induce men to worship God, and when he fell through pride the race fell with him in that they had consented to worship God through Satan. Satan makes himself the mediator of worship. I doubt if Satan has ever permitted men to feel that they were asked to worship him. Satan's proposition is that the world should worship God through him. "Bend the knee to me," he said to our Christ. "Worship God through me. Let me be your director of worship." He never effaced himself. He always sought to share with God the throne of this world and that is the thing he has persisted in. That is the thing he is at today in the world. Satan is an angel of light. When he comes to us with seductive wiles, he does not come as an imp with a pitchfork and clothed in brilliant scarlet:

> "Sin is a monster of such hideous mien,
> That to be hated needs but to be seen;
> But seen too oft, familiar with its face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Sin is always painted in Rembrandt colours. Sin is seductive because it is delightful and beautiful and charming. Satan takes this world and fills it with beauty and puts into it men of charm and of great ability. He fills the world with works of art and of usefulness and all these things he brings into tribute to himself and tells us we are to use

them and make them the end and aim of life. He tells us there is no danger in these processes as there is no evil in them; that they are given in response to natural appetites. We simply follow the nature of the life we have and do it without sin. Satan's bad philosophy of conduct in the world is this: Whatever is natural is beautiful, whatever is beautiful is right; it could not be otherwise. And all the time in the background of this philosophy he is developing the spirit of antichrist, creating for himself in men a dominating influence by blinding them to the fact that idolatry is anything which hinders, or forbids the pre-eminence of Christ in human life. Satan goes on developing the spirit of opposition to Christ with the purpose of developing a man who shall oppose Christ. The ultimate revelation of the spirit of antichrist is the antichrist himself, a man who, like Christ, shall seize the throne of the world, and who against Christ will fight out the great battle of Armageddon for the control of this world. John says, "It is the last hour." Here is the whole issue. It is the issue of Christ or Antichrist. It is the issue of one mediator or the other. Men will line up on one side or the other. Here is the final issue fulfilling the word of Jesus, "He that is not with me is against me."

What is it then when you see this but that the natural and necessary result has happened? "Some went out from us." We came and proclaimed in the world this Christ of God. People were gathered

to Him, their experience was our experience and the Christian group was gathered together in the community. "Some have gone out from us." John does not tell us that every man who names the name of Christ, who calls Him Lord will be true to Him in the great hour of conflict. One of the greatest controversies that ever arose in the Christian Church was over the question whether or not men or women, who under the Roman persecutions had denied Christ, should be admitted back into the Christian body. Great leaders held the ground that when a man had once denied his Lord, there was no hope of recovery for him, and I am not at all sure but that they were right.

There are a variety of reasons for which men go out because they are not of us. Men leave the Christian body because they are not identified with Jesus Christ. They drift out. One of the most demoralising influences upon the churches of Christ in our great city centres is to be found in the presence of a multitude of church drifters. I do not say that they are Christians but they have been identified with the Christian body; they have come up from the rural centres, from the small town churches. They have changed residences, but in the new localities they have not identified themselves with the local body of disciples. They have the name of living while spiritually dead. They acknowledge no responsibility, they bear none of the church burdens. They live worldly lives.

While professing themselves godly, they deny the power of godliness and the responsibilities of the Christian profession. They have drifted out because they were not of us. It is no uncommon experience for pastors of great churches in one city, while speaking in another, to have members of their own local parish who have been lost on the church roll, greet them and claim privileges because of their former association with, and present membership in, the church to which they make no report, acknowledge no obligation, and render no service. They drift; they go out. What a multitude of men have so drifted. They are everywhere critical of the church. They are mere sermon tasters. They do not transfer their church membership. They have lost their prayer life, their testimony, their sense of spiritual communion and contact with God through neglect of His Word.

Not only have these great groups of drifters gone out, but there are some who have gone out by more violent opposition to the church program of enlarged service. They went out but they did not take with them the sense of God's fellowship. They proved themselves men of stunted sympathies, of no spirit of sacrifice, of an unwillingness to give or to serve. One does not know what became of Barnabas. He had been the "Son of Consolation" to the Church in Jerusalem, but something happened; he had a controversy with Paul. The Scripture narrative which tells that story declares that

Paul and his co-labourers went forth bearing the blessing of the Church. It only says that Barnabas went out. Perhaps like many another he was betrayed into an undue anger and permitting anger to become bitterness he went out, leaving himself no place in partnership in the church life.

There are those who go out because of doctrinal differences. They lose the old faith; they come to new convictions of the essential truths the Church has held; they find themselves out of harmony with the ancient landmarks of faith; so they go out. There ought to be in every church life spiritual forces so strong that when one gets out of harmony and sympathy with the life of the Church, he will be forced out bodily. There ought to be an expulsive power of truth in the Gospel as well as an attractive power in the Gospel doctrines. If his doctrine be out of harmony with the truth held by the Church, the best thing is for him to get out. He ought to find within himself or within the Church a spiritual imperative requiring that he go out. To live within the Church fold while denying the Church faith is a desperate and damnable hypocrisy. It is heart-breaking to see them go, but they should go. They first surrender some one truth which does not seem to be essential. They find directly that the surrender of that truth is like a tiny stream of water percolating through the levee which holds the river in. It seems very small and unimportant at first, but directly a breach has been

made the whole levee is swept away and the rush of the river sweeps hundreds of lives out of existence and millions of dollars' worth of property to destruction. What a day this is! How often the hearts of the faithful are wrung with the realisation that many are going out from us for this cause—they are no longer with us.

Again, what a great multitude there are of those who go out from us because they are unable to become a part of us. They were under our influence; they worshipped in our congregation; they were subject for a time to our teaching; they seemed to believe and approve the things we taught. But they did not commit themselves; they did not wholly come to Christ; they went out from us because they were not of us. What a great number there are. Who are they? You will be thinking with me of some of those who have gone out. Do you know that of the four million gathered in the Bible Schools of this land, eighty per cent. will go out because they are not of us? How dear they have been to us. You have had a great Bible School, eighty per cent. of whom have gone out—lost. They are not of you. Where are they? Ask the winds of the heavens. Ask the far reaches of the earth. Gone, because they sat and listened and believed not, because they moved out unwon; because you did not win their hearts. Think of the splendid men and women who have sat in your pews, who have listened to your pastors, who have

heard the Gospel message. They have been husbands of Christian wives, and wives of Christian husbands, but they have gone out. Where are they? Preaching one day, a splendid young fellow came down to me at the close and with a broken heart said, "I am the son of a minister and I have gone out because I was not of his home, I was not of his church. I have gone out to ruin and shame. I went out because his Gospel did not reach me."

Multitudes of men everywhere—some have gone out to this place or that; all because they were not of us. The hardest thing for the Christian minister to do is to keep himself absolutely sweet and absolutely true at the same time; not to become censorious in his judgment of men. Placarded on buildings and circulated in every direction are invitations for men to come and hear some new gospel or some new cult. John says that those who stayed in the Church held the faith once for all delivered to the saints and to the experience once for all shared. These ever held fast to the hope once for all kindled in their hearts when they believed. To be true to Christ and stand for Him against all odds is the supreme business of the Church of Christ. They went out from us because they were not of us! But we are to abide! That is the conflict.

I am often asked in various parts of the country by devoutly spiritual men and women in the

churches what they should do when their pastor has departed from the faith, when the local church seems to be satisfied with an emasculated gospel. Should they not leave the church? My invariable answer is "No." That is not the Christian principle as enunciated by John. Let those who have departed from the faith depart from the church. Let those who are faithful to Christ contend in love for the faith once for all delivered. Let them stay in the churches and create an atmosphere so profoundly spiritual, of such devotion and loyalty that those who are not of the church will go out from the church. The Lord Jesus in His message to the Church at Laodicea said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." Where Christ and one faithful disciple have fellowship, they constitute the Church. One such disciple can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. The buildings, the prestige, the ministry, the missions and missionaries, the schools, all the investments of the churches of today, are held in trust by the churches from our fathers and from the Christ of our fathers. We have no right to surrender these things to those who depart from the faith. Let them go out because they are not of us.

### THE CONFLICT

What is the conflict about? Where does this

conflict centre? I wonder if I can say it simply enough for you to realise it? The conflict is about the Person of Christ. Not a conflict about His ethics. The world today has accepted the ethics of Jesus as the standards of the world's morals. That is not to say that the world practices what it accepts. The United States Government has made its yard-stick thirty-six inches and every citizen of the United States accepts the thirty-six-inch yard measure. The United States Government has made its pound weight sixteen ounces and the whole United States has accepted the sixteen ounces to the pound. That is not saying that every man that measures goods measures thirty-six inches to the yard or that the man who weighs goods gives sixteen ounces to the pound—not by a good deal.

The whole world while not obeying accepts the one standard of morality, that a man's life should be as clean as a woman's life. Ask the multitude of young men who soil the very fountain of their lives at its source and pass on a curse of venereal disease to other lives. The whole world consents that a woman should be holy, that her very thought should be chaste, that she should give herself to reproducing in life a life that should be as holy as her own. Looking upon many women today you need not ask the question as to whether they are living that life, with their painted cheeks, with their extravagant dresses, with their lax moral conduct. You know that the Christian woman

and the Christian Church is altogether at variance with the standard of living as evidenced by the world.

Ask yourself the question whether the world has accepted the standard that I am my brother's keeper. Has the old world come to embody in practice the ideals and conceptions of Jesus? Men of the world everywhere proclaim their acceptance of the Golden Rule in principle but they have forgotten the Golden Rule in practice. Claiming the ethics of Jesus, the world puts the ethics of Jesus out of practice. So I say deliberately that the great question is not the question of Christ's standards nor the question of Christ's conceptions—the question is the question of Jesus Christ Himself; man's attitude to Him; man's relation to Him in the world. There are two great forces operating in this world. I mean physical forces. There are forces centrifugal and forces centripetal; forces that flee from the centre and forces that seek the centre. The earth is turning on its axis at the rate of nineteen miles a second. We are going so rapidly that if any one of us simply went on in a straight line we would go faster than a cannon ball without stop till we reached the uttermost outer rim of space—the ultimate possible reach of distance from the centre, the earth being the centre. Can you conceive of Jesus Christ as the moral, the spiritual centre, the intellectual and the vital centre of this world? Then you understand that there are certain things that

drive men in every direction from Him. He being the heart of the world's attraction, He being the compelling centre, unspiritual humanity lines up against Him, unspiritual human forces co-operate against Him and the men and forces of this age array themselves against Him. Centrifugal forces! They are under the leadership of the antichrist, *who would put any other than Christ upon the throne of this universe.*

Thank God, there is a centripetal force that attracts men to Him! Lay a magnet upon a dish of sand in which are retained certain iron filings. Instantly, because of the character of the magnet, every filing would leave its place in the sand and spring to the magnet. So because there is something in human life, a personality that responds to the personality of God in Christ, when He is presented men leap to meet Him in faith. The thought of these men is in harmony with His thought, their souls with His spirit. Christ is Himself the cohesive power, moral and spiritual, in this universe. And the great business in this world for the Christian is the business of abiding in Christ, of yielding to the centripetal force of spiritual life that is in Christ. Set yourself intelligently against all that leads you or seduces you away from Him.

One day, traveling in the Southwest, as I looked out of my car window upon a muddy river we were crossing, a gentleman said to me, " This is the river

Nile." I looked at him perhaps with a degree of incredulous interest. He said, "In name it is the Red River, but it does for this valley what the Nile does for its valley. Every year at the freshet season it brings down the rich alluvial deposits from the hills and plains of the upper country till this soil is made as rich as the soil of the Nile. We have here a granary that would supply an almost limitless population. But," said he, "it has another habit, far more dangerous, sometimes almost fatal. At every season of freshet this river becomes a source of litigation between the residents of Texas and those of Oklahoma. A citizen of Texas may go to bed at night owning a farm of a thousand acres. The same man may waken the next morning to realise that this river has changed its course, thereby perhaps cutting off six hundred acres of his farm and adding it to the farm of his Oklahoma neighbour. Therefore there is an almost endless chain of litigation between the farmers of the two sides of the river to determine the ownership of the ever-shifting soil. You cannot imagine the turmoil and confusion caused by this."

I did not hear much else that my neighbour on the coach had to say. I began to think of the territory of human life. There are men who seem under all ordinary circumstances to belong wholly to Christ, whose life interests and activities are given to Him and His Church. They resist ordi-

nary temptations, they maintain uniformly high standards of conduct. Their associations are good, they are moral, without reproach. But some day the high waters of temptation rise. The usual appeals are no longer able to hold them steady; their ordinary influences seem insufficient in the great freshet of spiritual upheaval. They are swept from their moorings. The territory of life that seems to belong so securely to the Lord Jesus shifts place and is temporarily, at least, held by Satan. They yield to Satan in some whirl of temptation. The current of life grows too strong, its waters flow too fiercely. They yield to Satan and some morning wake up to find that the devil has them in his power. They have gone into sin. Ah, who can compute the damage done the cause of Christ in the world by this shifting instability of life, the uncertainty of our moral standards, the uncertainty of our spiritual relations?

Therefore the closing message of this passage of truth comes with tremendous sternness and tremendous pathos of appeal—abide in Him! You have a certain standing in Christ. Raise your standards in keeping with your standing. Take a stand, and stand. Put on the whole armour of God and having done all, stand. Set yourself to one path. Depart not from it. Contend for your right as you obey your imperative duty to live your life for Christ according to the light He gives you. Adhere to your spiritual convictions. Be true to your heav-

enly visions. Obey the divine impulses that move in your soul. Let there be no shifting of the soil, no fluctuating ownership of the territory of your life. Refuse the current of your life the right under any circumstances to change course. Let there be no uncertainty about your ideals and your standards in human contacts. Require of yourself a constant confession of Jesus Christ. Put into your attitude to Jesus Christ in the world that of the men who came out to David saying, "We are with thee, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse," and confess that Christ Jesus is the Son of God. Therefore, confess Him in the home, in the street, in the factory, in the counting room, in the social gathering, in the political assembly, in the halls of justice. Wherever men meet and talk together confession must be made of Christ. Any other course is disloyalty. Anything else than this is treachery to the Captain of our salvation, unto Whom we have yielded the sovereign control of life itself for time and eternity.

## VII

## TRANSFORMING LOVE

*"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."*—I JOHN 3: 1-3.

IN connection with these verses read the preceding two verses, the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth of the preceding chapter, "And now, my little children, abide in him; that if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is begotten of him." Then, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." Thus, you see, chapter two should end with verse twenty-seven and chapter three would then begin properly with verse twenty-eight. John has been excavating in the mine of

precious truth. Long ago he uncovered for us a rich vein, and through each succeeding verse in his Epistle, as he has digged deeper, the vein has proved to be richer, fuller and deeper. And now in these two last verses he has reached the fulness, the thickness, of the richest vein of truth uncovered anywhere in the mine of God's revelation. If He shall appear, we must have boldness before Him when He comes.

The apostle began by setting forth the fact of the eternal life manifested in the world and then declared that we have fellowship with that eternal life as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. Then he portrayed the fact that that fellowship with Christ produced a conflict between hate and love, between darkness and light. He moved on to the proclamation of the presence of Christ in the world, and of endless conflict (triumphant conflict for Christ) with another potentate, another power, another person. Every man must take sides, must join issue, must stand either with the one master or the other, for the establishment of one cause or the other, for the triumph of one governing principle in life or the other governing principle in life. He reveals to us the fact that this is to be and has been all along a purely personal question. The revelation of God, through Jesus Christ, bringing eternal life into the world, is a personal question. It is not a question of ethics; it is not a code of law; it is not a system of morality. It is purely a question of a Person.

*Christianity is Christ.* The Christian cause is the personal cause of the Son of God. He is here a living Person, a reigning personality. Christian fellowship is a personal matter. It is not fellowship with an institution. It is not the joining of a church; it is not identifying one's self with a cause. It is allegiance to, and communion with, a Person. The Lord Jesus Christ is the revelation of life, light and love, but He is also the medium of the communication of life, light and love. There flows through Him to men all that God is, so that man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He has fellowship with the Father, and fellowship with the Son—a personal fellowship.

So, also, there is fellowship between the saints—a personal fellowship. The conflict is personal. It is not simply a matter of principle. It is a matter of standing with a Being as men are always prone to do. They lose sight of the cause; they follow their leader. They join issue on behalf of persons who lead and speak for them. Every cause centres itself in some spokesman. Every cause eventuates in some person. And the cause of God in this world is a question of personal relation to Jesus Christ and the eternal Father through Him. It is a question of taking sides personally. It is not enough that I take sides mentally, or even morally. I must, as a child of God, declare myself in this world. Christ's honour is my honour; Christ's cause is my cause; Christ's presence is my glory and

reward; Christ's truth is my truth; Christ's message is my message. All the fundamental doctrines that belong to Him belong to me and I must contend for them as I contend for my own honour, my own life. I must accept that supreme weight of personal responsibility.

Let me try to illustrate to you what I mean. I knew two boys in a group of boys. They were bosom friends; they were always together. They worked together. They rejoiced together. They sorrowed together. One of them lived in his own home. The other frequently visited it. They both called the same woman "Mother," though she was mother in fact to but one of them. There came a night when in the rollicking rowdyism of the group they undertook to force upon one of them the doing of a thing that he had said he never would do in his whole life. He had promised his mother that he never would drink any alcoholic beverage. But that night this group of boys laid violent hands upon him. They tied his hands and his feet, and they bound him and put back his head and pried open his teeth and were forcing the liquor down his throat. It was nothing to them except that he should meet their standards, go with them all the way on the road of their dissipation. He had fought them until his strength was exhausted, and then at the last, as his bosom companion stood there to pour the liquor between his lips, he said to him, "If you do that what will my mother say?" And

instantly, as one of them told me afterwards, it seemed as if the woman herself was there, the gracious, white-haired, wonderful mother of them both. It was no longer a question of conduct, of association; it was no longer a question of play, of what one should do. It was her presence that suddenly revealed the whole situation, and his friend flinging out his arms, thrust their companions aside, opened his knife and set his friend free, and said, "No man can force my friend to break the heart of his mother." That is just where John leaves us in the closing verse of this second chapter of his Epistle. It is a question of conflict between light and darkness. It is a question of standing for certain principles and keeping certain realisations in the contacts of life THAT I MAY HAVE BOLDNESS IN HIS PRESENCE. It is possible that He will come in a moment. It is possible He will reveal Himself today; the heavens may open, the shekinah cloud may bring Him and we may be revealed before Him. What shall I say in His presence?

And then there is a pause—there ought not to be any paragraph in the Scriptures—between the twenty-eighth verse of chapter two and the first verse of chapter three. Suddenly John finds himself gripped with an overwhelming emotion as to what the presence of Christ may mean to him and to them. Dare I stand before Him? Dare I look into His face? Dare I bare my conduct to the white light of His holy presence? Oh, the thought

of the presence of Jesus Christ is the most terrifying consideration that ever fell upon a man's conscience. Look into His face! I dare not do it! My judgment approves the verdict of my conscience. I dare not stand before Him. Our God is a consuming fire. His presence is the death of sin. His presence is the blight of unworthiness. His holiness reveals me in all my unworthiness and blackness of sin. I dare not! And then in the presence of this terrible thing, this judgment of the anticipated presence of Christ, "What can I do?" It is then he suddenly and joyfully cries, "Beloved, we are children of God! We are children of God!" That is the relation. That is the comfort, and the consolation.

In his wonderfully interesting book, "Chimes from a Jester's Bell," Robert Burdett tells of a lad who had played truant from school. He had gone to school in the morning. He had come home for lunch. He had gone back in the afternoon and when four o'clock came and the other children went trooping past his home, this lad did not come home. His mother was in the front yard working among the flowers where she always waited for him on a spring day. Four-thirty came and the boy was not there. Five came and he was not there. Five-thirty came, and then he came running and panting down the street until he saw his mother. Then his feet began to lag. Slower and slower he came. He did not lift his eyes for the

welcoming smile, to where she waited as he came through the gate. He came and stood before her with downcast eyes, and she said, "Son, where have you been?" "I have been to school." And he put out one stubby, bare toe and began to cast up a breastwork of sand even as he began to build up a breastwork of lies, a refuge of deceit to hide behind. And she said, "But school has been out nearly two hours." "Yes, ma'am, but I was kept in. Teacher did not treat me fair. I had to stay." She said, "Little son, what is it that makes your jacket so wet?" "I ran so fast I sweated it through trying to get here after I got out of school."

"But, dear," the mother went on, "what is your hair doing all wet, and what are your feet doing muddy?" And the boy built a parapet of sand with his foot and threw up a redoubt of lies for his soul and said, "One of the boys threw some water on me because I would not stop for him." And then she put her hand under the little lad's chin and said, "But, dear, the teacher went by an hour and a half ago and she stopped to talk with me. You have not been to school this afternoon." The boy stood before his judge and he could not lift his eyes up to her face. And then, gently, firmly, she lifted the little quivering chin up and made him look into her face, the face of his judge, and behold it was his mother's face. And he put his feet on the parapet of falsehood, and he crushed under foot

the redoubt of lies, and just flung himself into his mother's arms and washed his heart clean with a flood of tears till his soiled heart was sweet again after the confession of sin. His judge was his mother! Oh, you know what that means. He dared not lift his eyes to his judge. But he *can* look into his mother's eyes; and he will forget the thing that was upon him with the blackness of a great shame. "Mother!"

John sees himself standing before the Great White Throne. John sees the Church there. We dare not lift up our eyes. We dare not look into His face—but our judge is our Father. We are His children and we fling ourselves upon Him and look into our Father's face. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God." Every accusing voice of conscience falls away in the presence of this fact. He is my Father. Oh, that is the supreme joy! My Father! My heart condemns me; my Father is greater than my heart. I am wrong—of course I am! I am unworthy, without dispute I am utterly unworthy, but I stand before my Father! My Father is to pass sentence and all the discipline which I deserve, and must have, is not to be administered by my judge. But the penalty that is to be visited upon my sin is to be visited upon it by my Father. My Father will not drive me from His presence nor put me away because I am unworthy—He is my Father!

There is a story of a judge before whom appeared a ragged, uncombed, uncouth youth in a tattered, soiled worn-out suit that had once been a uniform. The youth stood in the prisoner's box; the evidence was given against him and the verdict of guilt was rendered. As the judge stood up to pass sentence he said to this young man, "Is there anything you have to say why sentence should not be passed upon you?" Then the youth put his hand into his coat and took out of his pocket a soiled and crumpled note and said, "That is all, sir." The judge opened and read it and suddenly his face went white. Then the tears fell and he came to his feet and stood trembling, and looked down at the boy. Then he sat himself down, and took his pen and wrote and pronounced the sentence. But when he had passed sentence he said, "Gentlemen of the jury and assembled friends. This is not the end of this case. I will pay the fine for this prisoner. I suspend sentence and I do it on the basis of the note he handed me, which reads, 'Dear father: I am dying on the battlefield and my buddy is by me. He has been wounded too, but he has drawn me on his own back toward safety. I am dying but he tells me he will stay by and his arms will be around me until the last. I am writing this note to you for him. He is my buddy who has risked his life for me. If he escapes he will bring the note to you and I am asking you for your love to me to take him in. He has no home nor

kin upon the earth.'" And the judge continued, "On the blood of my boy, on the appeal of my beloved, this is my son. Sentence is suspended. I shall take out papers of adoption at once."

Transformation! Certainly. The prisoner has gone free; his debts paid; the conditions of the law perfectly approved and fulfilled. His rags are taken away from him, and he is taken into the house of the judge. He looks into the face of that judge but he does not stand before him as a criminal. Wealth and culture are lavished upon him. He has been adopted. That does not fully illustrate what I am saying. This does not fully illustrate what John is saying here, for something beyond adoption happens. When Jesus Christ was taken hold upon by the travailing pains of labour, to bring forth sons and daughters into His kingdom, they were born of the Spirit, not adopted. They became partakers of the divine nature. We are children, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. The divine nature is within us.

Let me again try to illustrate. I saw a little flower in a poor, rocky, barren soil. It was a choice plant but it was poverty-stricken and barely sent up one little stem of bloom where there should have been a dozen. And I lifted the little flower and planted its roots into the very heart of the rich soil of the garden and it began to partake of the soil of the garden. All the sweetness of the garden entered into it and it became of the nature of the soil

in which it lived. John says that is what happens to a man who gives himself to Christ. He takes hold of the roots of God's life and God enters into the man and makes him His child.

My Father is rich, in houses and lands,
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands.
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full, He has riches untold.

Then listen:

My Father's own Son, the Saviour of men,
Once wandered on earth as the poorest of them,
But now He is reigning forever on high,
And will give me a home in heav'n by and by.

A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
They're building a palace for me over there.
Though exiled from home, yet still I may sing,
All glory to God, I'm the child of a King.

Why should I care about my circumstances here? Everything awaits the day of His coming. Heirship! I enter into the heritage of the robe, and the crown, and the Name, and the Presence—that is the word here.

### THE DIVINE RELATION

The second great thing that John declares in view of this divine relationship, of the divine anticipation, the divine relation, the divine expectancy,

is this: "We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." What a word that is—to be like Jesus Christ! One of the foremost preachers of the city came recently into my study and sat down with me for an hour, and during the progress of our conversation he said, "I want to make a confession to you. I think it will do me good. For years I have been preaching an objective Christ and very little of a subjective Christ. I am doing my best now to get back, to come into a realisation of a subjective Christ and to preach Him to men." A few days later a young man from the Young Men's Christian Association came into my study and said, "There has been a great change in Dr. So-and-So's ministry. A year or so ago he was dealing with sins—todays it is with sin. Once he spoke of the Christ of history only—now of the Christ of experience. We have sensed a new power in his message and only last week men were saved as he stood in the lobby of the Young Men's Christian Association and preached a spiritual realisation, a spiritual communication, a spiritual illumination, a spiritual nature—now available in Christ to all who believe on Him. Preaching of a Christ who was historic but now he is preaching the historic Christ who is subjectively before us and with us. And the attendant results are tremendous."

And yet John seems to say, "Look yonder; see Him on the throne; see this spiritual Being; see the essence of all glory of the eternal God, and then

look back yonder to see what He is. "We shall be like Him." We follow His footsteps. We behold Him in suffering; we have had the testimony of eye-witnesses, what He was as the revealed Son of God. We shall be like Him when we see Him in glory. And while we wait for that day of His appearing, we must reproduce in our daily lives the quality of life He displayed in His earthly life.

Someone said recently—"I have been listening to you preachers a long while and it seems to me you are leaving God out of your preaching. With all your insistence upon orthodoxy, you are confronting us all the time only with Christ. Where is God in your Christian scheme?" Surely that is the truth, for all that we know of God we know in Christ. All we ever shall know of God we have in Jesus Christ. He is God incarnate. All the glory of the eternal is in Him revealed.

So John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares, "We see God yonder in Jesus. We see God in the coming Jesus. We shall be like Him, without fleck or flaw, without blemish, without reproach in His sight."

Dr. Ralph Baldwin is responsible for the following story of the portrait of Dr. Pusey which hangs upon the hall of Christ Church College, Oxford. About the time of the appearance of the "Life of Pusey" this portrait appeared and was hung in Christ Church. It was known that Pusey had always refused to sit for his portrait and the art

of photography had not as yet been perfected. How then came such a splendid likeness into existence? It was there for all to see; the small familiar cap crowning his head; the furrowed brow; the sharp straight-lined mouth; the deep, keen eye; the very expression of the face was familiar to his many students. A woman who had never seen the great divine painted this portrait. As one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement he was greatly admired. A woman in a small village was moved with an almost idolatrous affection and admiration for him. She read all his writings. Whenever she came in contact with anyone who had been in Oxford she insisted upon minute descriptions of the object of her adoration. Gradually she formed her own conception of the man from the descriptions received and the impressions made by his writings. Then she began to put on canvas his likeness as she saw it within her own soul. The result is there on the wall of Christ Church for all to see. Thus the Christian reproduces the likeness to Christ, "whom having not seen he loves."

It is said that Madame Guyon so contemplated the sufferings of the Lord Jesus that after a while red spots appeared in the palms and on the backs of her hands, and thorn-prints on her brow. "We shall be like him." I took a grain of wheat. I cast it into the soil. I saw the soil break and a shoot came forth and I said, "I sowed wheat, but this is

not wheat. This is a green blade." But the wheat grew and the stalk shot up. It came to its maturity and then in the head was an exact reproduction of that which I had sowed in the soil. Almighty God has put within us the necessity of the fulfilment of the one great comprehensive universal law that *like shall produce like.* John says, "We shall be like him," not because we reflect His glory, but we shall produce from within ourselves the very likeness of God in us, the nature of God communicated, the nature of God revealed in us through Christ Jesus. He is our hope of glory.

When a little baby is born he does not look like anything much. Wait a month or two and he looks like something. Wait six months and he looks like somebody. Wait five years and you begin to debate who it is he does look like. He is like his mother? He is like his father? You will hear the home debate. Wait until he attains his manhood; he is his father's son; she is her mother's daughter. Wait until he is forty and goes back to the community where his father was known when *he* was forty. Maybe some gray-haired old man will see him and will say, "Son, I could think I was with your father again." Oh, the passing years have brought the likeness and the nature out. "We shall be like him." I do not know that there is written in all the Word of God a more glorious thing than this. It is said of Him in prophecy, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." David

sees the other side of the great truth when he says, "I shall be satisfied when I awake beholding his form." "I shall be satisfied when I awake with his likeness"—reproduced, exemplified, glorified. "When he shall appear we shall be like him." "Every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

### A LAST WORD

It is a far cry from what we are today to what we shall be. It is a long stretch to what we hope for, in ourselves, in that day. I take this temper of mine, this imagination that first betrays and then flays me. I take this heart, so capable of loving and so longing to love without regard to what men give back. I take these hands, capable of a variety of things, evil and good. I take these feet that might tread no path but the path of duty. I find my imagination flaming with evil and I find my feet in perverse ways and my hands at selfish tasks and I cry, "Oh, wretched man that I am; Oh, wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And John and Paul and James and Jude and Peter and all the others cry, with one exultant cry, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." When I have sensed His presence; when I have understood that it is a personal matter between Him and me; when I have come to cast aside all the philosophies and the sophistries, and

have come to realise that there is nothing but a personal, intimate relationship with my Lord, I will dig out of my life all the weeds and thistles and thorns. I will weed out of my conduct and motives and purpose all that is wrong and by His grace, I will cultivate the wheat and the flowers. I will give myself to the exercise of prayer and meditation and the reading of God's Word, the bearing of life and lip testimony. All I am and have I will put into the task of letting God have a chance in my life, of letting my soul have a chance with God.

Look back in history and see the men who proved His presence. There were the three Hebrew Children cast into the furnace of fire, who came out of it without the smell of fire on their clothes. There was Joseph, the strange young man in a foreign land with no social position, with no standing, with no reputation, with only the consciousness of God within him. Tempted within a wealthy environment to seduce himself from his virtue and his faith, he said, "How can I sin against God and do this great wickedness?" There were Paul and Peter in an age when paganism dominated everything about them, keeping their contacts pure, both in spite of their environment. I think, today, of the Christian missionaries in foreign lands who must rear their children in the very midst of idolatry and sensuousness and yet must keep their children with their faces turned toward God and their souls unspotted from the world, in order to

bring them unscathed out of the furnace of carnality and the burning heat of sensuality, into the white life produced by a holy faith.

And you in your home, in your environment, in your office, in your streets! God the eternal dwells in you and calls upon you to reproduce His likeness, to keep yourself unspotted from the world, with hands that are clean, hearts that are pure, minds that cherish no evil, souls given to virtue, lives given to service. Yielding yourself to Him while He reigns within you expressing Himself in your life. Oh, yes, I can now give myself to the task of being pure in the world since I am His representative and His reproduction; because I am His I have my hope set upon Him. I live in the energy of His Spirit and through Him can do this impossible thing, "To be in the world as He is in the world" without shame, without reproach, and without fear.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God!"

## VIII

# THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

*"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. . . . God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us: hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."*—I JOHN 4:7-13.

IN this passage we have set forth the governing principle of our life as Christians. Read it again slowly, carefully. This, then, is the governing principle of Christian life. It provides a principle which is interpretative in all life's relations, in all life's duties, and in all life's privileges for the Christian. It is a principle distinct from that governing the lives of believers before they become Christians. It is also a principle distinct from that which governs the Christian in his relation to the world. The governing principle of the believer before his redemption was the principle of

carnality. He was controlled by the natural life, unregenerate, unspiritual, unsaved. His mind was a carnal mind, at enmity against God and incapable of pleasing Him.

The principle governing the Christian in his relation to the world is the principle of goodwill, or beneficence. He is separated from the world by virtue of his experience of regeneration, by virtue also of the nature of God, the eternal life which abides in him through Christ, and necessarily, by virtue of the light realm in which he lives and walks, in contrast to the darkness in which the whole world abides, lying in the evil one. This separation of life and condition calls forth from the Christian a compassionate goodwill. Out of that will be born the effort to

> "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
> Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave,
> Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
> Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save."

Between the Christian and the world there is a deep-set and most vital antagonism; it is the inherent antagonism between light and darkness; between love and hate; between life and death. There is a spiritual repulsion between the Church and the world, consonant in character to that of the opposite poles of a magnet. They are mutually repellent. Yet the principle governing the Chris-

tian Church must be so beneficent as on its part to permit a winsome attractiveness and a beneficent seeking to wóo the world away from its darkness and blindness into the light and liberty of the sons of God.

But the governing principle of life between Christians is love. Not beneficence only, but the affection of a vital blood kinship. They are born of one Father; they partake of one life; they have had one experience and have been baptised into one body. They are now bound together by ties as indissoluble as those which hold together the various parts of the body—eye, ear, hands and feet. Therefore, they are bound to love each the other as each loves himself. They are one.

By this principle of love, therefore, every thought, word, deed, motive, secret and cherished purpose, and desire of the heart, are to be measured. Love is the plummet and the level by which the walls of our spiritual houses are judged. Love is the yardstick by which our deeds as Christians in relation to other Christians are measured. Love is the quality by which the fabric of our life pattern as Christians in relation to other Christians, is tested. It is the warp and woof in the garment of our righteousness.

Some years ago I observed, in Florida, in the packing houses where the oranges were prepared for shipment, that they had a long trough with holes of varying sizes cut in its bottom. This

trough was elevated at an incline sufficient to permit the oranges to run down its slope. As they ran down the trough, they dropped through the holes, each separated from its fellows, according to its size and value. These, as well as the number in the case prepared for shipping, was determined by the size of the holes through which they dropped. I have conceived of life as a trough by which our deeds are measured, and the hole sizing them is the love we give our fellows. Our deeds are small or large or indifferent as measured by the love they embody. But I observed also that after the oranges were sized, they were again separated by the character of their skins. The most valuable of all were those known as "russets." Their outer surface had been so affected by a certain parasite that the quality and flavour of the rind had somehow not escaped into the air but had been returned into the essence of the orange itself. So also the outer surface of the Christian's life must give evidence that under the treatment of the divine life, love, the finest essence and quality of life, has returned into the heart rather than has been dissipated into the world. This return current of life deepens, quickens, enriches life, and makes him who possesses it in marked degree the most desired of all God's children, in his relation to others.

### THE SEED AND THE SOIL

The Christian is presented in the Word of God

as a tender spiritual plant in the garden of God. But he is a human plant capable of defending himself against chilling frosts, against the blighting droughts attendant upon changing seasons. He is capable also of considering the character of the soil in which he is to grow and the character of the seed with which he is to mingle pollen for the fructifying of life. The seed of the Christian's spiritual life is God, *i. e.*, the germ of life producing spiritual life in the believer, is God Himself. But God is love, so the fruit-producing principle of the whole spiritual nature for the believer, is love. Even as God said, "I will dwell in you and walk in you. I will be your God and you shall be my people." And again, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me," for "Christ is formed in us the hope of glory."

But also the soil in which spiritual life grows is love. We are planted in Him (Rom. 6:5). That is, the realm in which the Christian lives, the source from which he draws sustenance, is God. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." "The life we now live in the flesh we live by faith of the Son of God," for, "we died and our lives are hid with Christ in God." Christ is our life. So then, though it be hard to understand, the Christian's seed of life, and the Christian's soil for life, are alike—God; and God is love. A simple illustration may the better manifest my meaning: A pitcher is in the water, while at the same time the water is in

the pitcher. So God is in the believer, and the believer is in God. Thus the life source from which we draw sustenance, and the nature which we as Christians sustain, are both love. In this connection there are three brief considerations to be taken account of.

### GOD, THE LIFE SOURCE OF LOVE

First: The life of love will demonstrate God as its source. In the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians the Apostle Paul declares that every manifestation of life without love is a failure. The gift of utterance, the acquirement of knowledge, the equipment for prophecy, the ability to interpret, the efficient faith removing mountains, leaves the disciple of Christ nothing, if he has not love. He may be charitable, he may even become a martyr and yet live a profitless life, if not controlled by this governing principle of life for the Christian—love. We do well to let him be heard in his own God-inspired language, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Love is of God; it neither arises from within, nor flows from, the

natural man. The Christian loves not by his earthly nature but by his heavenly nature. This governing principle of his life operates from the nature of God through his nature.

John in this Epistle, fourth chapter, seventh verse, thus exhorts believers, "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God." There is no substitute for this love and there is no other source from which it arises. In the beginning of the material world, God by inspiration laid down this governing principle, "Every seed produces after its own kind." It is easily demonstrable that this is true, not alone for the physical world, but for the spiritual world also. There is no spiritual life apart from the spiritual seed. The fruit of the spirit neither grows in a carnal soil nor out of a carnal nature. We produce after our kind. All the elements of reproduction as evidenced in the colour of the skin, the character of the hair, the physical formation of the body, racial characteristics and distinctions, are paralleled in the reproduction of spiritual seed after its own kind. God is our Father. Christ is the one medium through whom the divine nature is communicated to men. The love principle therefore as applied in human life and exemplified in human conduct, demonstrates the fact that the man so applying it is born of God. He can get his life from no other source. This principle can operate in no other being. Men

may indeed have broad sympathies and be actuated by kindly motives; they may be charitably inclined; they may manifest a high and beautiful culture; they may be winsome and attractive and naturally lovable to a marked degree; but the love which moves in the Christian life is obtained, let it be said again, from no source save from God Himself, and from God only as He communicates His nature to the believer in Christ through Christ when received as Saviour and confessed as Lord by the believer.

It was my privilege, as a youth, to live in a great old Southern home. Hard by the steps leading down from the front veranda into the yard, was a great bed of hyacinths which in the balmy climate of my Southern home, bloomed perennially without transplanting. Across the years comes back the keen thrill of expectancy with which, as a lad, I watched for the coming of the first flowers in the early spring. When the robins left us for their nesting in the Northland, when the south winds blew softly, when all the sleeping world was stirring from its hibernation; first the shoot and then the flowering stem came forth. There were some single and some double flowers; some were blue; some were purple; some were pink; some were white; BUT EACH COLOUR ALWAYS BLOOMED FROM THE SAME BULBS AND IN THE SAME PLACE. There was never a transference. The pink bulb never made a mistake and grew a purple flower, nor did the purple bulb ever produce a white hyacinth.

Each after its own kind produced out of its heart the flower in accord with its nature. So it is with the child of God. The nature which demonstates the divine life within us is born out of the heart of God and He says that the governing principle of our lives as Christians is love.

Ofter one has seen that both the seed and the fruit are affected by the soil in which the seed grows. It is easy to understand, therefore, how Christians, though they be born of God and have in them His seed, foolishly and vainly try to feed their spiritual natures on the perishing things of earth, the self-life, the world, the flesh, the pleasures of time and of sense. Thus often even the perfect germ of life does not produce a perfect fruitage. Therefore, the heart of love should feed itself from the soil of love, and it will inevitably reproduce the life of love, manifesting the life of God as its source.

### DEMONSTRATING THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

Second: The life of love will demonstrate the development of the unmarred spirit of Christ in the believer. "Christ is formed in us the hope of glory." Paul writes this practical exhortation to the Church at Colossæ, "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedi-

ence: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; SEEING THAT YE HAVE PUT OFF THE OLD MAN WITH HIS DOINGS, AND HAVE PUT ON THE NEW MAN THAT IS BEING RENEWED UNTO KNOWLEDGE AFTER THE IMAGE OF HIM THAT CREATED HIM." It is thus also that he exhorts the Romans, (Rom. 12:2): "And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable and perfect will of God." Christ within, works a marvelous transformation in the life of the believer, for "we all with unveiled faces beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord the Spirit." Paul writes of Christ as being "encalyxed" in him, and that his purpose was to uncalyx the Christ in his message and in his daily life. What a conception! And how true to reality! You can see in the life of the believer the unfolding manifestation of Christ even as you see the unfolding beauty of experience and enlarging fragrance of the rose as one by one the enclosing calyxes fall away and the bud opens its heart to gather in and to transmit to every beholder the beauty and fragrance of the great everywhere of God's out-of-doors.

But every gardener knows that one little worm

cutting its way into the heart of the rose, may despoil every petal of its beauty and symmetry, and rob the rose of all its fragrance. The silk cocoon is a marvelous structure. It is said that the thread of silk woven out of the body of the silk worm in its unbroken length, is as strong as a steel thread of the same size; and yet the silk worm cutting its way out of the cocoon cuts every strand of the woven thread, and so far mars its perfection that it can never be restored to first class condition. Sin in the heart is a worm, gnawing its way out through every fibre of man's being. One germ of hate in the heart of a Christian mars every act and deed of his life. One point of cherished bitterness, one surviving sense of estrangement, becomes an infected and infecting focus, poisoning the whole fountain of life. There is no sin so destructive to Christians as the sin of hate, of malice, of bitterness and of estrangement.

There is a terrible cataloging of the works of the flesh in the fifth chapter of Galatians, verse nineteen. Of the sixteen enumerated, three have to do with sexual uncleanness, two with treason against God, two with dissipation growing out of worldliness, and eight have to do with and manifest the controlling principle of spiritual death in some form of hate. Behold them! Enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings. What a serpent's brood they are, and how terrible is the fact that the Holy Spirit associates them with

fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, drunkenness, revelling, and such like! Now hate poisons the whole life. Love is the only antidote for hate known to God or man. Culture cannot cure it; civilisation does not outgrow it; knowledge does not eliminate it; wealth cannot buy it off. Every man finds himself helpless against the constantly recurring cause of, and instigation to, estrangement and bitterness. It is a death-dealing disease, resultant from the sting of the old serpent, the devil. And love is the madstone and love is the milk. Lay the madstone to the wound until it absorbs its full of the poison of hate, and then bathe it in the milk of love again until the poison of hate is absorbed and keep applying this panacea in dual form to this festering wound. Nothing else demonstrates the presence of Christ in one's life so thoroughly as the presence of love and the absence of hate. The man whose governing principle of life is love can be reasoned with: he will be found patient and courteous and kind; he will be long-suffering and gentle; he will be characterised by the absence of suspicion and jealousy and envy; he will be charitable and forgiving, not seeking the things which are his own but the things which belong to others for their building up. It is not strange that in the early Church the heathen world was amazed, saying, "Behold, how they love one another." Today, also, the signet ring of love is just as truly and just

as universally the sign to the world that we are the betrothed of Christ, as in that day. The all-embracing, all-compelling, all-controlling principle of love applied in the daily life between Christian believers, would demonstrate to the world as no other argument, persuasion or force, could ever do, that the Spirit of Christ reigns within the Christian body.

### BETTER THAN RUBIES

Finally, love demonstrates its homely virtues as of more value than any spectacular, spiritual gifts. It is of greater value than sparkling rubies in the crown of Christian virtues. The Christian world is slow to see that the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians lies half way between the twelfth and the fourteenth chapters. It is not there by accident but by design; it belongs in the Holy Spirit's instruction concerning the gifts of the Spirit to the Church and to believers. The Early Church was not more enamoured of the spectacular than is the Church in this generation. We still run after tongues and healings and knowledge and office. We still exploit the Christian prophet, teacher, ruler, governor. But for the most part the Christian world misses the fact that the Divine Spirit puts the emphasis par-excellence upon His gift of love to the Church. We may have all tongues, all knowledge, speak with all eloquence, prophesy and interpret, and these will mean nothing without love.

Love is kind and considerate; it is courteous and eagerly helpful.

I think of John T. Pullen, the banker, in Raleigh, North Carolina, as a living, daily embodiment of love. His pockets were constantly filled with gifts for children, with books or pamphlets helpful to adults, with some simple thing which made easy access to the heart and mind of strangers, permitting him to speak a loving word for the blessed Master. He never seemed happy unless he was giving. His fortune, his time, his office, were as freely given to the service of God as was his presence in the sanctuary and his testimony in the service of praise. I had gone one day to the cemetery to bury a pauper. To my intense amazement, I discovered that she was not being buried in the potter's field. Here was a lot nicely cared for, properly fenced. Upon inquiry, I discovered that John Pullen owned it and that he kept it for his family of strangers and poor ones of God's children. His life in that city was as fragrant for Christ as ever a rose was fragrant for the garden in which it bloomed. How kind he was, how gentle! It seemed that the gentleness of God lifted him above the ordinary level of life and made him great in helpful and considerate service.

Love is equally longsuffering, patient, forbearing, enduring. Somehow it finds grace not to retaliate against wrong or return evil for evil.

Love is generous, not sensitive. It is appreci-

ative of others, rejoicing in their advancement, their enrichment, their preference. Love is not suspicious, not envious. It seeks good and rejoices in finding it whether in one's self or in another.

Love expects the best from another. George Matheson has somewhere written, in effect: "I had rather fall into the hands of God than into the hands of my brother. My brother does not expect me to return from my wanderings. Before the shadows fall he closes the gate and returns to his house, despairing of me, though not despairing more than he was expecting to despair. But my Heavenly Father believes better of me. Even long after the shadows have fallen, He remains at the gate looking for the prodigal to return. The light is kept in the window, the best robe is ready." That is love, unfailing, generous.

Love covers a multitude of sins. Mr. Greatheart is the greatest character of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." I have a lad of whom his comrades in school wrote in their Annual, "His heart is as big as the world, but it has in it no room for holding the memory of a wrong." No higher enconium could have been printed, no finer quality of life could have been discovered than that heavenly wisdom and divine gentleness which enables him to draw the mantle of charity over the sins, intentional or unintentional, of his friends. Yes, this mantle of love born of the heart of God, manifesting the presence of His Christ in the heart of

the believer, will cover sins and shame, will heal wounds or hide them.

Finally and pre-eminently, love always seeks to serve, and counts its highest reward the privilege of service. Service is at once one's breath of life, and his crown of rejoicing. By serving love bears a testimony. It exemplifies the Spirit of, and points the way to Him who said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another."

The heart of the Gospel is the heart of Christ. Not that we first loved Him but that He loved us and gave Himself. "We love him because he first loved us." "Beloved, if God loved us, we ought also to love one another."

# IX

## ALL IN CHRIST

*"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."*—I JOHN 5: 10-11.

THE gentle Jesus of Nazareth one day, standing with His disciples before the fig tree to which He had come for food, suddenly turned upon it with blazing words of wrath and pronounced a curse. And the tree withered over night, so that the disciples, coming the next day, said, "Master, behold the tree which thou cursedst is withered away." It has been supposed by interpreters that the thing which made the Master so intensely angry and brought from His lips these words of cursing was that He found on the tree no figs and on and about the tree no evidence that there had been figs the season before, and no buds promising figs for the season to follow. So that in all the three possibilities of life—past, present and future—the tree demonstrated its uselessness. Why, then, should it cumber the ground?

If the Master was disgusted with the tree which was barren, He is delighted in this Epistle, because it has every promise for the future and every provision for the past and every possible power for the present. The First Epistle of John compasses the whole scope of time, and sweeps the whole horizon of eternity. There is nothing past that it does not contemplate; nothing future that it does not observe; nothing in the present that it does not reveal as touching man's life in its relation to God and in its relation to his fellowmen, flowing out of his relation to God.

Perhaps the most interesting and amazing spectacle in the world is the Niagara River. It flows out of Lake Erie and for thirty-three miles runs its way out to Lake Ontario, where it pours into that lake and is lost again. In that short course of thirty-three miles it displays all the elements that are locked up in the deepest depths of the great lakes at either end, and realises to those who are able to appreciate it every quality resident in the waters of the great lakes. It flows along a plateau so perfectly level that it is said the river has no bed; it simply flows over the surface of the ground; it flows through a reservoir so deep that its bottom has never been plumbed; it flows by green islands studded with farms and farmers' homes; sometimes not a quarter of a mile wide and sometimes three miles wide, sometimes babbling as a brook over the stones that are in its shallow bed, but flowing

toward the sea, gathering in itself all the powers of the untamed elements, it reveals what lies in the waters of the lakes and is the lakes in their depths. I have thought that we have in this fact a symbol at least of every Christian life, which coming out of the eternity of God and running its swift course upon the fleeting years for a brief span, at best seven to eight decades, returns unto God from whom it came. Yet it reveals in the short course of its earthly career every quality of the eternal Being Himself—the depths of God's nature, the infinity of His power, the marvels of His grace, the wonders of His love, the divinity of His compassion, the varied activity and energy of His Person. All that God is is revealed in the man God-born, God-possessed, God-indwelt.

There is no element of the nature of God that is not revealed in Christ and there is no element of the nature of God that is not revealed in the Christian, for he has been redeemed by grace and made a partaker of the divine nature. Think of it! It is incredible; it is beyond the reach of man's powers to realise, that the eternal God, whose thought shaped the worlds, whose word spoke them into being, whose hands fashioned them, the eternal God who holds the elements in His hands, who marshalled the ages before Him, who commands all its forces, who incorporates in Himself all the excellencies of moral character and reveals in Himself all the glories of spiritual nature—all that God is

in His illimitable greatness and glory is manifest in the man who by faith in Jesus Christ comes to be a partaker of the divine nature. We have eternal life!

### PAST TENSES

As I read this word again, it seems to me that in this Epistle we are inevitably thrust back upon the past tenses of God. How many times He turns our eyes to the past, "That which was from the beginning." "That which we heard and saw and handled of the Word of life." "That which was manifest of the life eternal." "The blood of Jesus Christ shed before the foundation of the world." Those who come under the drippings of that blood are an elect race, called, foreordained, established, secured before the foundations of the world were laid or ever the seas took their place, and God fixed their boundaries on the shore lines of the earth. We look on the past through the pages of this Book and we hear Him saying, "God loved and gave." That is ours. The provision is made. Over and over again with every possible phase of the truth we have it confirmed. All that God can do has been done; all that man needed to have done has been done. It is not man, but God who is to work out for Himself the riches of His grace, the glory of His mercy, the compassion of His love, the outpouring of Himself on the cross of Christ—they are all ours already.

### FUTURE TENSES

And then as one reads on through the Epistle he sees that God has some future tenses. When we look back in faith, we instinctively look forward with hope. We turn again to the fountain in which we are cleansed, in the long ago opened upon, and flowing from, Calvary. Then we look to that robing room in which we shall be dressed in the white robes which are the righteous acts of the saints. We look back for relief; we look forward for realisation. We come thereby to that great word of personal hope and inspiration, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And the inspiration of all the hope and the power, of all the appeal, of all the certainties of the past, merge into one great sentence, "He that hath this hope set on him, purifieth himself even as he is pure."

It is incredible yet wondrously true. My heart is moved within me! My soul is stirred! I have forgiveness! All my sins are blotted out! These hands which were once lent to evil deeds; this mind, not only given to evil imaginations but encouraging evil imaginings; this heart once the home of unholy passions—all brought to the fount of His shed blood and cleansed. I stand again before that Cross; I see my sins banked between me and God, impassable, lifting their hideous presence between God and me. And I look back to that Cross

and I see the drippings of the blood that washed my sins away! Ah! The power of the eternal Love that broke the barrier down:

"My soul looks back to see
The burden Thou didst bear,
While hanging on the cursed tree,
And knows her guilt was there.

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

Think of the promises of my God, the promises that are mine today, of that glorious hour when my realisation shall be as my anticipation now is; when with all sins forgiven, the last barrier shall be removed as the shadows flee before the rising sun of the new day; when pain and anguish and sorrow shall be no more, and there shall be no death and no parting and no patient waiting in hope because of the realisation of His fulfilled promises.

Recently, I spent two nights in a home where there was a little babe, a most engaging child of twenty months. I waited long enough for the "new" to wear off so that he would not fear me—then held out my arms to him. Trustfully, then, he put his arms about me and laid his little lips as soft as a rose-petal to my cheek. He could have had anything under heaven within my power to give him. Then he opened his little heart and

talked to me as for hours at a time I sat with him in my arms. He talked in a language that nobody but a father knows anything about. The mother said, "Is he not beautiful?" The father said, "Is he not wonderful?" Of course he was. He talked in one syllable. It was all he knew. He told me of the cows and the trains and the automobiles. He told me about his daddy; he told me about his mother; he told me of his nurse and his food—all in one syllable. Wonderful! He had four teeth and one tongue and he spoke eloquently with them all. Wonderful baby! There were tears in the eyes of the mother and father every time they spoke about him. I said, "What does it mean? Tell me about it." They said, "He has just gotten well." They lifted the little ear, oh, so tenderly. "Do you not see that scar? How tenderly the surgeon did his work. Then for six weeks with two nurses we kept him alive with stimulants. We went down again and again into the valley with him. We brought him back by the mercy of God. The prayers of our souls were not denied." Think of it! My God has said, there is going to be a day when there will never be a mother breaking her heart over the cradle of her baby. There will never be a father with heart torn by anxiety. Incredible things God has given us!

### PRESENT TENSES

And now I am only reminding you of the past

and pointing to the future to tell you with a great earnestness of God's present tenses in this Epistle. "He that hath the Son hath the life." There is no other way to say it. I found myself trying to say it in different ways. "He has now—holds in his hands—present possession—eternal life. Everything that is in the past is now realised in the present. Everything to be had in the future, the potentialities of the eternal God are mine today. All that there is in this universe is mine today in Jesus Christ. Every quality of God is mine now. Every promise of God is mine now. All the riches of the past, all the graces of the future, are mine now.

A Methodist bishop, recently returned from China, tells this story: "One day I talked with a priest of Buddha and I said, 'How old is your religion?' 'Four thousand years old, sir.' 'How long do you think it will continue?' The Buddhist priest looked into my face and said, 'I think it will not last very much longer.' The bishop said, 'Why?' The priest cast his eyes down to the ground and said, 'Jesus.'" Just one word! There is a dynamic power in that Name mighty enough to crumble age-long systems. There is in the eternal God light and life to blight all false religions. There is in Christ revealing God the judgment of the nations. He is the fearful One and He is the glorious One and in Him all the energies that flow from God converge upon the hour of destiny and

of determination of nations and men for eternity in relation to God. Jesus! Mighty Son of God—Reservoir of life. Oh! Turn your hearts to the possessive case and lay hold upon the promise of God that we have eternal life NOW. Concerning this we need not longer be moved with hope, for we have now all that God has promised and all that God can give in Christ Jesus. He who is God's, in Whom all the fulness of the Godhead is bodily manifested, Who is the effulgence of His glory—the express image of His person—is all ours NOW.

You know the story of the Eldorado mines? There was a worshiper of Mohammed who lived in a cottage on the hill and every week as he returned from his itinerary of commerce he drove his camel through a little stream. And every week as the camel drank he nosed up the pebbles that he might make a deeper place for drinking. And again and again the Mohammedan took up the bright stones and brought them home with him and put them on a shelf around the chimney. By and by a traveler came and told him of the easy comfort and riches that men had in the world and filled his eyes and his heart and his ears with discontent. So he sold his cottage and went out and wandered over the whole, wide world looking for wealth. He made great schemes; he entered into the commerce of the world, but at last, disappointed, he died in rags and poverty and was buried. The man who bought his little farm found the stones about the place and he,

too, preserved them. One day there came a traveler into the place and asked him if he knew what the stones were, and he said, "No," and brought them and laid them on a table before the traveler. The traveler said, "Why, these are diamonds!" So the owner sold them and began to exploit his mine. There they opened a mine and in it he found untold wealth for himself. By means of that wealth he became a prince and a potentate in his country. One had wealth but, ignorant of it, sold it and journeyed the world over to find it. The other only made use of what both had. In reality one was not richer than the other. So men go looking for spiritual power, for moral excellencies, and all the time they have it all in Christ Jesus. You need not to sell your house to purchase; you need not to give up your business; you can not find it by travel; there is no place in all this world more suitable than the place in which you are now for you to find and use the riches of grace. And you have here and now guaranteed title for possession to all the promises of God—a present fulfilment.

There is one sentence that Paul writes of Jesus Christ that must ever challenge the attention of every believer; "They drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ." Those Hebrews of the Wilderness did not realise His presence. They rebelled at the waters of Meribah. They were angry still before Horeb. They were ever ready to break into mutiny and

turn away from the presence of the eternal God who was constantly seeking to break forth into glory upon them. All the five Books of the Pentateuch reveal this strange struggle of resistance on the part of God's people while they wandered after Him and sought to realise Him. In the Pentateuch Israel seeks for a priest, constantly yearns for a mediator who can appear before God for them. Aaron is ordained, the Levitical system of worship is built up with its priests, burnt offerings, mercy seat and its holy of holies. But when you have finished Leviticus, even though you have found the place of the tent of meeting, the perfect priest has not been discovered. The whole Aaronic system seems to have failed in its ultimate purpose. The case between God and men demanded some better sacrifice than the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer; and a better priest than Aaron. Yet surely we cannot miss the fact that back of Aaron and the Aaronic system, there was that other Priest made a High Priest forever after the order of Melchesidek waiting to offer the perfect sacrifice, and to provide the perfect mediation.

As one reads the historic books of the Old Testament he is impressed with the same sense of failure. Through them all Israel looks for a king. First they choose their own, but his dynasty lasts less than a half-century. Then they consent to God's selection and glory in the promise of a kingdom that should never fail. David is upon the throne and

Israel waits for the establishment of that unending and glorious kingdom to which their hearts turn and with which the promises of God concern themselves. But Israel does not find that king in David. There is a sense of disappointment and incompleteness about him and his reign. So Solomon came with all his unspeakable riches and splendour of power. So his successors in office pass in line an endless and ever-varying procession. But at the end of every reign there is one word written—failure. All the kings of Israel were weighed in the balance and found wanting. There is failure everywhere. The one outstanding impression about every king, and the kingdom period of Israel's history was the impression of disappointment, of non-realisation of the expected glory and blessing. BUT THE KING WAS ALWAYS THERE. He was always offering to occupy the throne. In every new crisis, in every season of stress, He offered Himself again to His people. He was always coming to His own and they that were His own were ever refusing Him, often not even discerning His presence nor hearing His voice. They did not realise often that He was there. They would not put the crown upon His head.

The books of prophecy reveal the fact that Israel was ever looking for a prophet, one who, like Moses, was to come and abide in their midst. But though there were many prophets, they never heard the voice of THE Prophet. They could never realise

His presence. When Jeremiah weeps over the sins of the people, he almost finds Him, but not quite. When Ezekiel sees his visions, and when Daniel beholds the stone cut from the side of the mountain without hands, crushing all others, they almost sense the presence of THE Prophet, but not fully. Isaiah rises to heights of ethical conception far beyond his age and far beyond any other whoever wrote, even by the pen of inspiration. Yet Isaiah just misses that Prophet who was to come. So the books of prophecy close with the disappointing sense of failure, of expectation unfulfilled. BUT THE PROPHET WAS THERE.

After centuries through which they groped, and stumbled, and fell, till they were almost in despair searching for the Priest, for the King, for the Prophet, One who was all these came and dwelt among them, revealed the glory of God, proclaimed His kingdom, and offered them eternal life. But when He came to His own, they that were His own received Him not. Their answer to His presence was a cross.

Strange that the Church has learned so little from the history of the chosen people concerning this great secret of the divine presence, from their fearful dullness and stupidity. How often have His own disciples treated Him in the Church as Israel treated Him in the nation. Let us never forget it. This Christ having in His own person all that God is, and all that God has to give, is in

our midst today. He is offering Himself, inviting us to receive Him, to realise Him, and to live in the energy and power of eternal life received through Him.

There is a rather beautiful illustration of the thing I have been trying to say here in Florence Barclay's book, "The Rosary." It is a book which bears repeated readings. When the heroine, Jane, sings "The Rosary," Garth Dalmain finds his heart quickened with love toward the beautiful singer. He tells her of his love, but she, knowing of his intense love of the beautiful, refuses him on account of her own plainness. They were separated by time and distance. Two years later Garth became blind and in the sensitiveness of his soul hid himself away in his castle, eating his heart out in lonely longing for the love of one woman, hearing in his inmost soul the melody of her voice and yearning for the fragrance of her love, the delight of her presence. Jane returned from a trip around the world. She learns of his blindness, of his present situation, and instinctively discerns his purpose. She knew what was going on in the heart of her lover, and with love's true delight in giving, planned a campaign in which she purposed to lay siege to the citadel of his heart till it capitulated in surrender to her.

From his surgeon she obtained permission to become his nurse. Disguising her voice she came into his home, served him, and for many waiting

weeks with heart-breaking tenderness for her lover she never betrayed her identity. But her presence grew on him, his restlessness increased, his inward demand for her became unbearable, so that after a while he became irritable, unreasonable. There came a day when he could no longer be denied. She placed him in a chair, took a cord, bound it to his chair, and instructed him that if he needed her, or wished to reach her, all he had to do was to follow the cord, the other end of which he would find attached to the piano. Then she sat down and sang "The Rosary" again. As he listened, with white face and trembling hand, he arose, followed the cord his blind eyes could not see, to where his heart led him, till he gathered her into his arms with all the love and joy and longing of the waiting empty years. The blind eyes had been opened and now he enters into the heritage of his heart's desire. But nothing new had happened. Jane had been there with him for months. The same love, the same mercy, the same tenderness, the same infinite compassion, all that she had now to give had been there all along. But the poor, dull heart of the lover had not sensed the reality of her presence in her presence, and so he had gone on eating out his heart in craving for her.

How true that whole situation is of us in relation to our Christ. We yearn for comfort, for someone to understand, for the strength and purity of a love that will not let us go, for tenderness and patience

and forbearing helpfulness, for all that the Saviour means, and somehow we never seem to realise that all we long for, all that we can possibly need, is here for He is here with us now. There is naught that we need that we may not have this very moment if we will only open our eyes to His presence and take hold of Him. Every desire, every need, every possibility of the soul's need, is realisable in Jesus Christ, AND HE IS HERE.

There is only one further word. If what I have written here is true then face this question, sharp and challenging. In the name of God if you have such rights, such heavenly privileges of fellowship, such right to practice the presence of Christ, why not use that right? How dare the child of God do any other thing than to live daily in this world the eternal life in all the richest fullness of its divine quality as we have had it given us in Christ Jesus?

As a secretary of our Home Mission Society was discussing with me the gift of a million and a half dollars to the Society upon condition that the recipients and beneficiaries supported by its income must always be adherents of the old faith, I inadvertently spoke of the time when the Society would receive the actual gift. Quickly the secretary of the Board said, "This gift is not a promise, we have the bonds in hand." My interest quickened and a bit later I asked the secretary, "What are you going to do with these bonds? Put them in a vault?"

"Certainly," he replied, "but that is not all. We shall use the accruing interest from year to year in erecting new mission stations, sending into the service new missionaries hoping to win many new converts to the Lord Jesus Christ. For," said he, "the accruing interest of this magnificent sum of money will be in itself a rich and notable gift."

Is that not just the situation in which we are involved in relation to our own in Christ? We are heirs of God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have our eternal life as a present possession. We have made the venture of faith. We have the promise of eternal reward in the future. But in the meantime there are realisable assets and interests accruing from this promise of eternal life. We do not have to wait to realise eternal life when we are in heaven or when the Lord Jesus has set up His millennial kingdom upon the earth. That life must be lived today in our homes, in our cities, in our world. Today we must live the eternal life we have in Christ Jesus. That life will stand against every false doctrine. It will create and augment an implacable solidarity of opposition to every institution of evil. It will send every disciple of Jesus Christ into the world girded for service, and willing, if necessary, to experience the cross and the self-emptying involved therein, for this is the heritage of every follower of Jesus Christ. Let us apply to ourselves as Christians the significance of Milton's searching exhortation:

"Nor love thy life, nor hate,
But what thou livest, live well."

Let us never forget that we are His witnesses, we are all living epistles known and read of men. Every child of God, like the twelve spies sent out by Moses, must bring back to the world in which he lives, either a good report or a bad report of the land of promise. It is for us to determine today what our report shall be to the world in which we live.

# X

## "GUARD YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS"

*"We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. My little children, guard yourselves from idols."*—I JOHN 5: 18-21.

IN this Epistle is concentrated the very essence of the whole Gospel message. What is true of this Epistle as regards the books of the Bible, is true of this verse as regards this Epistle. "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself and the evil one toucheth him not." Again he says, "We are of God; and the whole world lieth in the evil one"; and again, "And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given unto us the understanding that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." "This is the true God, the eternal life," or the real God and

the real life. "Little children, guard yourselves from idols."

We are astounded as we come to the study of God's Word at the dogmatism of the apostolic teachers and writers. There is never a single wavering note. There is never a single questioning statement. Whatever they may have had in the beginning, by whatever passages and paths of doubts and misgivings they may have come, when they come to write and speak they assure us that all doubts are in the past, and all questionings are gone. "We know! We know!" John asserts it no less dogmatically than does Paul. On every ground, doctrine, experience, observation! On the ground of conviction, on the ground of revelation itself. These men stand out in the face of a hostile and unbelieving world declaring a certain great Gospel message. "We know." A famous teacher, master of many Oriental languages, said a little while ago, "I know Moses wrote the Pentateuch. If it is a question of scholarship, I have it. It is not a question now subject to debate. That debate is ended, I know!"

A distinguished preacher-author wrote a book some years ago, "The Gospel for an Age of Doubt." He might have put it all in this one terse sentence, "We know." The Gospel is not a debate. It is a declaration. It is not a philosophy. It is a revelation. The punctuation of the Gospel is never a question mark. It is a period. Some-

times an exclamation mark! The knowledge which John proclaims here is a knowledge which is absolute. It arises from three sources, evidences, experiences and explanations. He sets forth in detail the evidences. We saw; we felt; we heard; we handled. We walked about and beheld from every point of view. We have examined and tested. We know! We know on the evidences of our senses. The eternal God Himself has borne testimony. Three times He spoke out of heaven, "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him." The Holy Spirit hath wrought in Jesus of Nazareth certain marvelous signs by which we know. God declares Him to be His Son with power. He has been raised from the dead, and again God speaks through this miracle of His resurrection. We have the evidences and the life produced, the results attendant upon the risen Christ. And upon the evidences submitted, we know!

But the most marvelous thing in John's record is the absolute certitude of the knowledge that comes to Him of the experience in Jesus Christ. These Galilæan business men are suddenly lifted into world places of authority and responsibility. These men whose vision had never gone beyond the borders of Palestine are sweeping the horizon of time and eternity and embracing all the interests of this world in their own interests as servants of Christ.

A distinguished citizen who had charge of the

work of reconstruction in the city of Dayton after the flood of 1913, said to me one day, "When I first undertook this task I had a vision of work to be done for Sunset Avenue at a possible expenditure of a few hundred thousand dollars. But," said he, "the vision of the task gradually grew in proportion from one section of the city to the whole city, from the city to the Miami Valley, from the Valley to the State, from a few hundred thousand dollars to this present proportion of twenty-five million dollars. So as my conceptions of this work and my own task in it have grown, my conceptions of the Christian Church and the task committed to the pastor as its leader has grown." There is an ever-enlarging horizon to the Christian disciple. His vision must become increasingly clear. His conception of life with its obligations and opportunities for service must be enlarged. John, with his fellow disciples, had experienced what he called the New Birth. They had had a spiritual regeneration. By this experience they had come into a fellowship with Jesus Christ that lifted them out of their old Palestinian environment into that which gave them a vision of time and eternity, in which their lives were linked with Christ in the nature of the eternal God. And then John was telling them he had a right to say that he knew on the evidence as explained by men to whom these things had become true. Here were a group of Galilæan business men. Here were men of corrupt opinions and

corrupt practices who had suddenly become pure and clean. Here were men with no influence suddenly become famous. They were everywhere going through the world as God's ministers, messengers flaming with spiritual passion, souls consumed with altruistic love, flaming with desire for the souls of men. When they gave an explanation they said, "We met Jesus. We found in Jesus a quality of divine life."

Were I a poet or a painter, able with pen or brush to express upon canvas my thought, I should paint this picture. A king on his throne, clothed in purple splendour, in his hands the highest realities of earthly power. I would make him bold and self-confident. I would depict in his features all that make for charm in the things of this age. Before him should stand a man with marred features, with humped shoulders, with manacled hands, with his ankles chained to a Roman soldier. And I would have this manacled prisoner, insignificant as to personal appearance and contemptible in speech, with outstretched arms, with that look on his face that was never on land or sea, speaking to the man on the throne. I would somehow draw into the background the world in the process of being transformed from darkness to light. I would show old customs falling away. I would show slaves set free, women elevated, world empires tottering to their fall, institutions hoary with age, crumbling. Then the prisoner should undertake to

explain all this by the experience of his own life transformation. He should be saying, "Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." For out of that heavenly vision had came the transcendent and transforming change that not only made him an apostle, but in its working process made the Roman empire to tremble on its foundations, yes, tremble, crumble and fall. The only explanation of Saul of Tarsus changed into the Apostle Paul is to be found in the Gospel of Christ. The only explanation of the power overturning Rome, lay in the fact that a man on the way to Damascus saw a great light above the sun in brightness and met One who spoke to his soul of God and claimed in his life the supreme and sovereign authority.

Jesus made those demands upon Saul not without reason. He did it on the ground of the evidence submitted and of the explanation offered.

A man one day asked why I believed the Gospel. The Church and her place in the world is answer enough. If I had had no other reason for believing I should have taken hold of this end of the Church chain, the links of which are joined together all the way back to the river Jordan, link by link, generation by generation, group by group, church by church, message by message, until from this age to that we look again into the face of, and feel the power of, Jesus Christ. WE KNOW! The philosophies of this world have ever insisted that men's

religious experiences obtain their value from within themselves; that the proper basis of truth is in ourselves; that conscience, judgment, or reason, must be the final arbiter of the interpretation of religious messages. The contrary point of view is that it is not consciousness, not conscience, not judgment, not reason, not the wisdom of this world—it is the Person of Jesus Himself who is the final arbiter of truth.

What, then, is the great message held here and announced? I imagine that some of you are saying, "You are again harping on the question of doctrine. It does not matter what a man believes so long as he is sincere." I imagine you are saying, "You are constantly raising doctrinal questions, you are making too much of orthodoxy." Does it make no difference? Let us see! Here is a man whose body is famishing for water. And he comes along his way till he reaches two springs. He kneels at one to drink and he is healed by the refreshing spring. So he leaves it and goes away. He comes again famishing for water and stops at the same place, though not at the same spring, and lays his lips to its waters, but they are brackish and deadly poisonous with the minerals over whose bed its waters flow. So he drinks to his death. Does it make no difference from which spring he drinks? Two men are lost in the wilderness and their only hope of sustaining food is the berries that grow in the wilds. There are poison berries and berries

that are delicious, sweet, safe, and life giving. Does it make no difference from which bush they pick the berries they eat? One finds life by eating; the other finds death. So Solomon, who had all wisdom and discernment, said, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

All life depends on right doctrine. Upright conduct depends on true thinking; righteousness of life's relations on true living. What the citadel of the mind holds in opinion the life will express in its activities always and everywhere. The true doctrine, then, is that Jesus is the Son of God. A dozen times John proves that Jesus is the Son of God. The antichrist denies; faith affirms. Faith confesses; unbelief repudiates. The Son of God is God incarnate; God manifest in the flesh. As regards the atonement, "The blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses from all sin." There is no other way. There is no other fountain of cleansing. There is no other possibility by which men may wash their souls from sin's fouling. There is to be a transformation of the life from what we now are in the flesh, in preparation for that great and glorious day when the Son of God appears, when His work in us is complete, when to Him the knees of all men are to bow. He indwells us now and we so become the very kinsmen, the very people of the living God, bearing His own mark in the world. And so John leads on from this revelation to point out that there are necessary issues involved in this

great statement of truth, "We are of God." How often he declares it! With what tenderness he says it! And yet with what persistence he affirms it! "The whole world lieth in the evil one." The god of this world is deceiving the world. He would destroy love in the world. For the love of the world is not of the Father. The great battle is between Christ dominating His people and Satan dominating the world. Christ in the Church! Satan in the world! Christ taking life to transform it. Satan taking life to deform it. The Christ principle governing! Satan's principle governing! He puts before us the world divided between the two governing principles. On the part of the Christian, love. On the part of the non-Christian, hate. On the part of the Christian, light. On the part of the non-Christian, darkness.

It is easy to illustrate this invisible conflict now raging in the spiritual world and among the spiritual forces about us. I am reminded of one night spent in the woods. I spent it around a great fire. I observed this interesting and peculiar conflict. We laid on the fire the fuel and the flames roared upward. As the fuel burned out, as the flames blazed, the darkness resisting, the shadows fell away and the great circle was in the light. The beasts, the trees and the creeping things were brought into the light in the glowing flames. But sometimes we were all but immersed in the darkness again. For a long time we were fascinated

by the alternating prevalence of light and darkness. So is it in this world. The Gospel is a flame and when the moments of white passion come, when the Church is caught in the grip of the divine life, men live in holy, flaming zeal for Christ. But when the burning is low, when zeal fags, when passion cools, when men are less in contact with Christ than they are privileged to be, then the darkness encroaches again. When the Church is cool or the Christian is backslidden, the darkness increases.

All the way through the centuries this conflict is on. It is on with the thing which happens every day. How constantly the conflict between light and darkness! We are at the noon day hour, the sun is at its zenith. It floods the whole world with light today. But eight hours from now the darkness will encroach upon the world. The sun will go down into the western sea and the dark shadows will come. Tomorrow, the shadows will flee away, and the light will flood the world. It is divided half in half, and no man knows which is triumphing. But in this Word of God is written the promise that a day will come when there will be no night. In the world to come there is no night, no shadow, no darkness, and no artificial light for the Lord God is the light thereof. It will all be light because it proceeds forth from Christ. What is going on in the physical world is transpiring also in the spiritual world. The resisting power of the

darkness alternating the increasing power of light. Sometimes the darkness, bringing disappointment and fear and misgiving, prevails. And sometimes prevails the light that shall indeed flood the whole world in the day when Christ appears.

That, then, is the setting in which John pronounces his last warning, "Guard yourselves from idols." In a world where conflict between Christ and Satan is the great and constant issue in life, where a man's relation is altogether of one or altogether of the other, "Guard yourselves from idols," is an essentially necessary warning.

One is perfectly sure that the Holy Spirit did not here contemplate idols as material images. There is not a hint nor a suggestion that any of His disciples had ever bent the knee to material idols. Before becoming Christians they may have bowed before the image of Diana of the Ephesians. Possibly some of them on the way from Piræus to Athens had done obeisance to the statues by the way. But there is not a hint of image worship as the thing against which John warns them here. An idol may be an image, but not always a physical image—stone, gold, silver, brass. There are other images. If you close your eyes now you may see that which you do not see with the physical senses, but you may see it as none the less real. A word is an image, a face a thousand miles away, a conception, a purpose, a passion, a desire may be the image fixed before your mind. A Christian

Science friend of mine said a while ago, "Whatever a man sees as the great purpose of his life is god to him." John is saying the same thing. It is true in one sense! That is not the true God. An idol is anything, the possession of which becomes the supreme object and purpose of life. Idolatry is the pursuit of anything, any knowledge, any ambition, any interest that dominates and controls human life in its relation to the supreme object of its worship, the supreme goal of its purpose and desire.

Lord Bacon said that idolatry is divided into four conceptions in the minds of men: The conception of the tribe and the den; the conception of the market place and of the theatre. Thus there are four realms of idolatry; the tribe, the den, the market place, and the theatre. I imagine that this is what he meant and if so then he was strictly within the truth. The idolatry of the tribe is patriotism. The idolatry of the den (or the tent) is the home. The idolatry of the market place is commerce, business. The idolatry of the theatre is the idolatry of pleasure. When you stop to consider these four realms of idolatry, you have considered the whole realm of life's temptations. My country! My home! My business! My pleasure! What is there beyond? And the men who live in this world bow their knees as to the supreme master to the dominating principle in their own life. Multitudes of men there are who attribute to themselves all vir-

tues when they have been good citizens, who appropriate to themselves all excellencies when they have been good husbands, when the marriage and parental relations are held intact and kept in unsullied honour. There are many men who worship not at the family altar, but at the shrine of business. Their office is their one supreme passion. They worship commerce by which living is made, by which wealth accumulates. So, also, we know that there is a great multitude of men whose one supreme guiding principle in life is the pursuit of pleasure.

Here is the realm in which John warns his disciples, "Guard yourselves from idols." You who are God's children in the world, keep yourselves unspotted from the world. In these three verses he gives us the three probable directions of idolatrous worship. WE KNOW! WE KNOW! WE KNOW! Three times. What is it we know? We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not. He that is begotten of God keepeth himself and the evil one toucheth him not. First of all John tells us that unrighteousness is idolatry. I would to God that an indelible pen might engrave that fact upon your very souls. Unrighteousness is idolatry. Unrighteous conduct is sinful conduct—expressing sinful relation. John says over and over again, "He that is begotten of God sinneth not." I have found but one of the great theologians who has been willing to face out that truth. Yet the Spirit

of the living God does not contemplate a compromising life on the part of the child of God. He requires holiness unto the Lord, clean hands, clean hearts, clean minds, lives untainted, unstained, unpolluted from the world. "We are of God." Sin does not originate from within the Christian. Sin may overtake and defeat him, but it does not originate from within him. He is born of the Spirit of God. John is saying, "He who commits sin, his action originates from the devil." Guard yourselves from that manner of life that originates in unholy desire consenting to Satan, occasioned and controlled by Satan. That is idolatry!

It is a terrible assumption. It is a searching assertion. Guard yourselves from idols, from unrighteousness, lest you never escape it again as long as you live. As children of God, what about the daily conduct of your life, for here is the practice of idolatry. Here is the last word of Scripture. He is writing now the very last sentence ever inspired of the Spirit of God. What are the sins here? The sins that take hold of you in trade, the sins that take hold of you in society, the sins that your pleasure heaps upon you, the conduct of life in this world, the course of your life in this world, yielding to Satan's direction in the thing you do. That is idolatry. Guard yourselves! Attention! Enemies lurk in the shadows! Watch your step! There is a pitfall concealed in your path! Take heed lest there be found in you an evil heart of

unbelief, in turning away from God. That is the first warning.

Second: "We know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in the evil one." The whole world lies in the evil one, in the lap of the evil one. Here is the picture of a child nestling, cuddling, in the lap of his father. We are of God and the proposition from John is that we who are of God should never yield to the filial relation to Satan. Here he warns against the idolatry of relation as before he warned against the idolatry of conduct. Worldliness is idolatry. Worldliness—what is it? Worldliness is any energy or any activity in your life not inspired of God's Holy Spirit in relation to Jesus Christ. There is a world age, a world system, and a world spirit. There is an idolatry, therefore, of worldliness. Herbert Spencer is responsible for this statement, "There is an idolatry of reason." And if one may judge by the signs of the times, this day is largely given to that idolatry of reason.

There is a current philosophy that the task of the present age is to democratise God as we democratise societies and governments. The age would rob God of His throne, and His crown of authority and His splendour of empire. There is a mad effort to humanise God and deify man. A recent survey of certain American colleges reveals an appalling dominance of rationalism as the controlling philosophy of life among the students. Only thirty per cent.

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THEOLOGY



were Christian believing at all in the supernatural, or in the personality of God, or in immortality. It is even more true of the teachers of sociology and of geology. There are, perhaps, in the colleges of America, Christian and non-Christian, not more than thirty per cent. of teachers who believe in God, in immortality or in spiritual realities. The idolatry of reason! We are told everywhere today that the business of the Church of Christ is to educate its youth to be good citizens—educate them unto idolatry. We do not need a new generation of agnostics. We do not need a generation to be led in their thinking by educated materialists. It is not fitting that our children should come to accept scholarship as a reason for believing. No! "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." "Lean not to thine own understanding" is a warning having in it the same wisdom today as when the pen of inspiration wrote it three thousand years ago. There is a world system of thought. There is a world system of work. There is a world system of religion, a religion which denies spiritual realities and the supernatural in religion. "We are of God." How? Born of His Spirit we came into His kingdom through faith, a new nature being given us. Born of the Spirit we are kept of God. Therefore we are not in the lap of the evil one. Because we are born of Him we cannot worship or love or give allegiance to Satan. There is a world system of government. There is not a

government upon the globe that is not a moral failure. Idolatry? Certainly. Idolatry of the grossest sort, though of the ethical and cultural. One of the most popular of modern historians and novelists says, "God is just a little less ignorant than man and He will never get anywhere without man's aid." But the author is an avowed agnostic. But in Christian institutions when men dare to preach and teach that doctrine, they have already repudiated the inspiration that declared that "Unto him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess" that He is Lord of lords and King of kings. One by one the false concepts are to give way, but He abides forever.

Let me read you a description of idolatry written in God's Word: "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ. Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed,

and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us make trial of the Lord as some of them made trial. Neither murmur ye as some of them murmured and perished by the destroyer." Here is a perfect picture of modern day idolatry, the idolatry of pleasure, of play; the idolatry of murmuring and complaint. For both the idolatry of pleasure and of pain God destroyed a generation of His ancient people. He hates no less such idolatry among His people today. There is an awful present-day plague of idolatry of self-indulgence and of sinful relations. God claims the throne room in the sanctuary, in the individual lives of His people as well as in their corporate bodies. Give heed to His warning invitation, "I will walk in them and dwell in them. I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come ye out from among them and be ye separate and touch no unclean thing and I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters." "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

A recent story in "The Youth's Companion" is of a boy who enlisted as a private in the American army. In the barracks of his company he discovered on the walls many obscene pictures, coarse, sensuous, revolting. As he looked, there arose in him an indignant revolt. He felt that he must not, that he could not, look daily upon those vile

suggestions. He could not remain silent without protest in the presence of moral indignity. But he did not know how to voice his protest, how to give his indignation wise and righteous direction. He felt that it would not be enough to remove the vileness, he must supply purity. Finally, wisdom was given him.

When the barrack room was empty he brought from his trunk a package of pictures given him by his mother. Among them was the head of Christ. He took that picture and, slipping silently into the room, hung it in the midst of the pictures on the wall and slipped away. But he was not the only one who came silently into the room that night. Within forty-eight hours every other picture had mysteriously disappeared. Only the head of the matchless One remained upon the wall. Somehow the pure, chaste, cleanliness of that face had become a searchlight turned on the coarseness, the evil suggestiveness of those other pictures, and like Arabs who fold their tents in the night, and drift away, like mists before the rising of the sun and the dawning of the day, those sensuous pictures gave place. That is a suggestion of inspiration, the exhortation of divine wisdom. Put Christ in the centre. Give Him the throne. Put the reigns of the government of life in His hands. Crown Him in the home. Let Him reign in commerce. Make Him sovereign in government. Give Him the leadership in pleasure. Think what it would mean to

this world if one church, one man even, should really put Christ on the throne in the home, in business, in politics, in pleasure, and, persistently by his own life attitude keep Christ there, bringing all life into harmony with him.

That, then, is John's message, "Guard yourselves from idols," by keeping the throne room open only to the Christ, by bending the knee always and only to Him, by yielding life control to this Master alone. That is your safety, that is your high and heavenly privilege, that is God's imperative to the Christian and to the Christian Church. "Guard yourselves from idols."

THE END

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